

Saving the World: Three Core Themes to Help Rebuild the World History Survey

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THERE IS A CRISIS facing history, and it has been looming for some time. As early as the mid-1970s, William H. McNeill, the father of modern world history scholarship, warned that the pervasive tendency for faculty to pursue ever-narrowing specializations, combined with a widespread distaste for teaching survey courses, will be history's undoing. In his mind, without concerted pedagogical attention aimed at both cultivating student engagement and building an early awareness of history's relevance, the discipline cannot but slip "away from the privileged position it has hitherto occupied in high school and college curricula."¹ McNeill was anticipating a critical turning point in history survey instruction that would see the field pivot from the increasingly archaic Western Civilization model to a more forward-looking World History approach. He rightly saw this global turn as crucial for the future security of the larger discipline of history in higher education. "The only thing that can rescue us [historians]...is to find something worth teaching to undergraduates en masse," wrote McNeill in *The History Teacher*, "something all educated persons should know; something every active citizen ought to be familiar

with in order to conduct his life well and perform his public duties effectively.”² As if in response to these words, the world history survey course has grown at a spectacular rate within American higher education these last decades—largely at the expense of Western Civilization courses.

Much of this growth has been thanks to the fertile ground offered by globally minded general education programs and liberal arts curricula in both colleges and high schools. My own history department at Grand Valley State University now offers roughly forty world history survey courses each academic year at the 100 and 200 level.³ That most every one of these survey classes reaches capacity is no doubt thanks to my institution’s emphasis on a diverse liberal arts education and specific B.A. degree requirements that list world history courses as fulfillment options.⁴ Looking outside my institution, another way to quantify this growth is with the AP World History exam, which has grown by roughly 340% from 2006 to 2016.⁵ Consider also that the field of world history is also now supported by a number of journals and professional organizations, including the World History Association, the *Journal of World History* and the *Journal of Global History*—none of which existed when McNeill initially sounded his alarm.

So, has history’s supposed crisis then been averted? Has world history become that “something worth teaching” that will keep history departments relevant and secure? At first glance, it might seem so. On closer inspection, however, while world history has certainly been buoyed by higher education’s recent shift towards global cross-culturalism, little has been done to address the underlying issues of pedagogical coherence, student engagement, and faculty interest in the world history survey itself. And here lies the problem. The underlying stigmas associated with survey instruction are timeless, and the demands of a world history survey course are perhaps the most arduous and maligned of all possible teaching assignments.⁶ Many in higher education hold the belief that teaching a genuine world history survey in the space of one or even two semesters is simply not possible, let alone worthwhile. One need look no further than the College Board’s recent decision to aggressively truncate the scope of their world history curriculum down to a mere eight-hundred years as evidence of this pervasive sense of futility.⁷

To be sure, the challenges facing world history instructors are serious. Class sizes are large—sometimes excessively so. Most instructors have little invested in world history research, despite the field’s growing relevance in professional scholarship. Indeed, many (if not most) instructors of world history courses are junior or part-time faculty with no training in world history pedagogy whatsoever. This rather cynical division of labor helps to liberate senior faculty who prefer to give their time to the “real history” of narrowly focused upper-division courses. For new or overworked world history instructors, content management and lecture preparation can become all-consuming, while their students are left overwhelmed and discouraged by the scope of material. It is little wonder, then, that textbooks often become the central resource for survey instructors and their students, sometimes to an extent that is inappropriate.⁸ (I am not against using textbooks in the world history survey and will have more to say about them in the recommended readings listed in **Appendix A**.) With instruction that is heavily textbook-dependent, there necessarily comes a push towards content coverage and, as a result, the many rich opportunities for analysis, critical thinking, and in-depth discussion that should otherwise flourish in a world history classroom are steamrolled by a relentless parade of chapters and key terms.⁹ To be sure, since McNeill’s original article, there have been a number of fine pedagogical essays written on how to combat these tendencies and how best to mitigate their effects in the world history classroom, many of which have been published in this journal.¹⁰ I am writing here to not just sound the alarm all over again or to criticize these other fine essays. Rather, I am writing simply to offer a clear way forward. With so many students making their way into history departments through the world history survey, we simply cannot afford to allow these courses to become an afterthought. The world history survey must be regarded for what it truly is—the first (and often only) occasion college students will have to engage with the discipline of history. To therefore let instructors “feel their way” or “do their own thing” in the world history classroom is self-destructive to the entire discipline of history.

It has been with these issues in mind that I have found myself significantly revising my world history courses each semester, overhauling my syllabi, reworking lessons, and changing assigned

texts to create a better survey experience. My aim, ultimately, has been to create an undergraduate world history course that is genuinely global, utilizes but is not overly dependent upon a textbook, is appealing and relevant to non-history majors, fosters historical thinking, breaks free of the Western Civilization model entirely, integrates recent scholarship, and promotes analysis and debate over content coverage, all while retaining a high degree of coherence. My purpose with this essay is not to relate my syllabus and lesson plans in detail, but to offer the broad framework (or philosophy) that I have developed and used to rebuild my courses (with a sample course outline included in **Appendix B**).

In brief, my approach to teaching world history rests upon three “core themes.” These core themes are Energy, Environment, and Exchange—which collectively can be termed the “3E Approach.” These themes can be readily adopted by others in the creation of course schedules, lesson plans, and learning objectives. They can be deployed individually or in harmony. Each theme can serve as an organizing principle for the course or can be more loosely applied as a simple recurring topic of discussion. These core themes can also be used to scaffold specific lectures, debates, and assignments at a more granular level. Finally, the core themes of Energy, Environment, and Exchange offer solutions to some of the more pervasive and deep-rooted issues facing world history instructors, such as periodization, management of scope, content coverage, developing useful units of analysis, and avoiding common biases, such as Eurocentrism. The purpose of this essay is to offer, in broad outline, a viable way forward for the world history survey that still leverages a high degree of freedom for instructors.

Core Theme #1: Energy

How best to compartmentalize a history of the world? This is often the first question instructors confront when preparing their world history syllabi and lectures, and for good reason. Partitioning a course into units (be they eras, regions, or civilizations) helps to break the vast content of world history into manageable chunks, while at the same time creating a roadmap to guide students and instructors. A compartmentalization schema can create a semblance of narrative, drawing attention to underlying patterns and processes

that otherwise would be obscured by the vast scope and content of world history. In a word, compartmentalization creates *coherence*. World history textbooks are often constructed around specific civilizations or cultural groups. Such units are then packaged into chronological blocks variously labeled as “Eras,” “Ages,” or “Periods.” While helpful in managing content, I find that these typical divisions rely upon artificial constructions of space and time that ultimately obfuscate more than they elucidate. Making insightful comparisons between cultures, environments, or time periods is no easy task in such a format. With each region and era neatly partitioned, it is implied that any exchanges, continuities, or connections between them are of little consequence, or are not present at all. Simply put, the interconnectivity, mobility, fluidity, and cross-cultural foundations of world history are undermined with these all-too-typical divisions and they must be done away with.

The first of my core themes envisions energy—namely, how humans utilize energy to sustain their ways of life—as an overarching schema to better compartmentalize the world history survey course.¹¹ By relying upon energy regimes as a scaffold for the course, instructors can more easily foster ongoing analysis and comparisons of various cultures from the Paleolithic to the modern industrial era and across all regions of the world with much less difficulty.¹² The monolithic borders of states and civilizations are left behind for a framework that is more amenable to the diversity and dynamism of human history on the global scale. From the first day of class, it must be stressed that humans depend first and foremost upon energy to survive, just as any other living organism. How communities collect and deploy energy depends upon environmental factors as well as our collective ability to innovate new and more efficient systems of energy capture. For the first lecture of the course, I lead an introductory examination of the wide range of energy systems and the accompanying ways-of-life our species has utilized to sustain itself on Earth. Such life-ways include nomadic pastoralism, urban industrialism, sedentary horticulture, transhumance, hunting-gathering, and intensive irrigated agriculture. Such an introduction not only reveals to students the various societies that will appear throughout the course, but, more importantly, offers a broad framework for thinking about how various cultures, social structures, and environmental relationships are created and sustained.

<i>The Biological Old Regime</i>		
Culture	Energy Regime	Emergent Properties
Paleolithic	Hunting-gathering ↓ <i>Low energy intake, low population density</i>	Nomadism, kin-based social structures, animism, tool-making
Neolithic / Early Agrarian	Horticulture and early domestication of animals ↓ <i>Moderate energy intake, moderate population density</i>	Sedentism, core-periphery exchange, copper ornamentation, villages, wealth inequality, political power structures
Nomadic Pastoralist	Herding and/or domestication of animals ↓ <i>Low to moderate energy intake, low population density</i>	Nomadism, tribal political orders, long-distance trade, social and cultural interactions with sedentary agriculturalists
Late Agrarian	Advanced agriculture and exploitation of animal labor ↓ <i>High energy intake, high population density</i>	Urbanization, formal divisions of labor, long-distance exchanges, organized religions, patriarchy, complex economies
<i>The Biological New Regime</i>		
Culture	Energy Regime	Emergent Properties
Early Industrial	Coal and steam ↓ <i>Exponential increase in energy, exponential increase in population density</i>	Industrial capitalism, global divisions of labor, global commerce, exponential population growth
Modern Era / Late Industrial	Oil, internal combustion engines, and electricity ↓ <i>Anthropocene</i>	Accelerated innovation, global warfare, accelerated environmental degradation, growing global inequality

Figure 1: Energy Regimes in World History

I have now begun dividing my world history survey course into units of dominant energy regimes, each with accompanying social and cultural properties¹³ (see **Figure 1**). There is the hunting-gathering energy regime that supported small Paleolithic communities. Roughly 10,000 years ago, agriculture in various forms appeared, which spawned sedentary life-ways, rapid population growth, and coercive power structures. Following the domestication of key species of herd animals, there appeared nomadic pastoralism. And, of course, with the exploitation of fossil fuel energy, there began an industrialized era of accelerated growth and global connectivity. I have found great success in presenting and discussing these energy systems in the even broader contexts of the “Biological Old Regime” and the “Biological New Regime,” as this gets students thinking in terms of human relationships with the environment and helps to set up a framework for thinking about the transformative power of the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions. Using energy as a mode of analysis will continually draw students’ attentions back to considerations of ways-of-life and the foundations of culture, and will help to avoid prejudicial value-judgments about the relative “development” of one society over another.

As a mental exercise, I find students respond positively to quantification and discussions of how and why humans use energy in such varied ways. For example, in terms of average daily per capita energy consumption, hunter-gatherers enjoyed little more than 2,000 calories, early agriculturalists roughly 5,000, advanced agriculturalists 26,000, and early industrialists 77,000. Today, it is not uncommon for individuals living in affluent, industrialized communities to routinely consume 230,000 calories of energy daily.¹⁴ How such flows of energy inform the social and cultural fabric of society is a robust topic for class discussion, especially when it comes to issues of sustainability, environmental change, trade, regional and global divisions of labor, and the role of states in collecting and controlling energy. Discussion of modern industrial energy regimes easily segues into considerations of an emerging “Anthropocene.” When seeking ways to stress the relevance of world history to my students, it is when discussing the impacts of modern energy regimes that I feel I have had the greatest success.

Even as a broadly conceived course structure, examining humanity’s past through the lens of energy naturally generates more

balanced and purposeful comparisons of various societies and time periods than what standard texts offer. The Paleolithic—a topic of study often maligned, but which is greatly needed to balance out the world history survey—is given its due attention in this approach. Understanding that *Homo sapiens* sustained themselves almost exclusively through nomadic foraging in the roughly 200,000 years before agriculture with remarkably low levels of population and social complexity helps to provide the vital context for the greater story of global change to come.¹⁵ In the opening weeks of the course, class discussions can address how exactly low-calorie intake per capita generates low levels of social complexity and distinct expressions of culture. Later, with the arrival of sedentary farming communities, students better appreciate the Agrarian Revolution as a critical turning point in our species' growth and capacity to create and sustain socially complex systems. The energy bonanza that accompanied the emergence of sedentary agriculture allowed for villages and towns to form, which in turn facilitated vastly increased scales of production, coercive state power structures, and complex social interdependencies. Here, instructors can present their students with a range of “emergent properties” that accompany this new energy regime and discuss their origins and utility to society. Divisions of labor, organized religions, recordkeeping, and sophisticated economic relations all make their appearance once agricultural surplus is generated. This same transformative revolution occurs all over again with the exploitation of fossil fuel energy. Students can visit these very same topics of discussion, examining how and why culture and society changes with the adoption of new ways-of-life and new systems of energy capture.

Here, then, we have a broad system of compartmentalization that is globally applicable, is intelligible to students, is anything but arbitrary, and facilitates an analytical way of thinking. Building a course around energy regimes forces both teachers and students to operate upon a foundation of deep time, where geology and the environment help shape culture and, in turn, where human communities ceaselessly labor to reshape environments. Using ways-of-life and energy regimes as units of analysis offers a broad yet comprehensive course structure whose components are clearly defined. Furthermore, energy systems demand no hard and fast endings as units of analysis—societies have adopted these regimes

at different times, to different degrees, and in different contexts. I must also stress here that there are no value judgments attached to societies in these regimes. Modern industrial societies are not (and should not be) presented as “better” or more “developed” than nomadic pastoralists or Neolithic farmers. Rather, they are each simply shown to be operating by different rules. To reinforce this point, I have found that many class sessions can explore the various ways in which quality of life *declines* when new energy regimes assert themselves in a society.¹⁶ Marshall Sahlins’ take on the Paleolithic as the “original affluent society” is one example of such a discussion that helps to question many assumptions students hold about the superiority of agrarian and industrial ways-of-life.¹⁷ Margaret Ehrenberg’s essay on the late agrarian origins of patriarchy and the shifting of gender roles from the Neolithic through to advanced agriculture is another excellent primer for class discussion.¹⁸ Such readings make great fodder for debate and allow students to question the widely assumed “history as development” model that many hold unconsciously in their minds.

Core Theme #2: Environment

With my own world history survey, I have come to incorporate the environment not so much as a framework, but as a pervasive theme of the course. Landscapes, microbial exchanges, climate change, the domestication of plants and animals—these are inescapable and defining elements of humanity’s past and must be considered critical to any world history course narrative. Indeed, if there is but one theme that unites all of humanity, regardless of era or way-of-life, it is our ever-changing relationship with the environment. So many of the significant turning points and transformations of human history have their basis in the environment. The Columbian Exchange, the Industrial Revolution, the Black Death, the Agrarian Revolution—each are intimately bound up in the environment. Because the environment has a hand to play in so much of world history, building awareness and appreciation of the environment early in the course is therefore essential. Following the first core theme of Energy helps greatly in this regard. As various societies and cultures are introduced throughout the semester, their ways-of-life can be considered within the context of their environment.

Nomadic pastoralists can be presented as products of the steppe and arid desert environments; early agrarian civilizations can be shown as thriving in fertile river valleys and alluvial flood plains; and Neolithic horticulturalists emerged only where the distribution of ideal potential domesticates allowed.

This approach is in no way intended to create a narrative of environmental determinism. *Homo sapiens* have, from their earliest Paleolithic days, shown themselves capable of transcending environmental barriers, moving beyond familiar biomes and climates into new and different frontiers. The history of our species is a testament to our ability to break environmental constraints, to re-engineer landscapes, and to bend nature to our benefit. Barry Cunliffe aptly summarizes the role of landscapes in shaping human history when he says that the environment simultaneously “constrains” and “empowers” human societies.¹⁹ In the Biological Old Regime, human activity was significantly limited by our restricted access to energy, which was predominantly organic in origin. It is here, in pre-industrial societies, that we see landscapes playing a powerful role sculpting human societies, their culture, their economy. And with the coming of the Biological New Regime and fossil fuel energy, students can better understand the Industrial Revolution in a global context as a monumental turning point in our relationship with the environment.

While this might appear as somewhat of a heavy-handed treatment of the environment, this approach is simply an effort to frame human history as it really is—something intimately bound to the natural world and to the geology and biomes of planet Earth. Framing human history broadly under the categories of a Biological Old Regime and a Biological New Regime is one way forward that has the added benefit of dovetailing well with the first core theme of Energy. This framework also aids in underscoring the truly awesome changes that accompanied the Agrarian Revolution and the exploitation of fossil fuels. That being said, energy systems are not the only way to effectively incorporate the environment into the world history survey. Robert B. Marks’ *The Origins of the Modern World* uses the nitrogen cycle as a means of tying humanity to the environment.²⁰ Nitrogen sustains not only the human body, but because of its role in nourishing plants, it plays a foundational role in sustaining agriculture and, therefore, all agrarian societies.

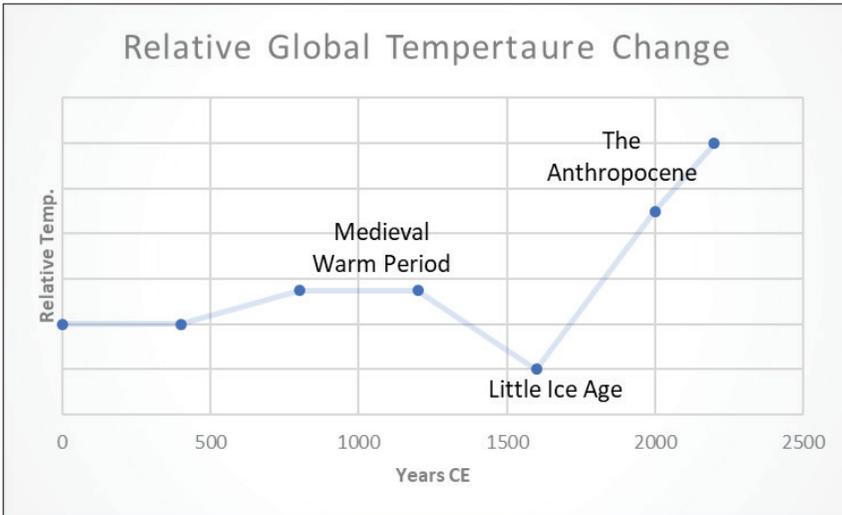


Figure 2: Using Climate Change as Historical Units of Study. A possible alternative framework for organizing a world history survey is to use key changes in global climate as markers for periodization. Rather than teach a “Post-Classical” or “Early Modern” era, instructors could teach to a “Medieval Warm Period” or “Little Ice Age.”

One could easily build a world history survey whose narrative is constructed around an unending quest for nitrogen. Another method is through considerations of climate change and how such fluctuations in temperature and precipitation have impacted human activity. Discussions of a “Little Ice Age,” the Medieval Warm Period, the Younger Dryas, the El Niño/La Niña Southern Oscillation, and Geoffrey Parker’s *Global Crisis*²¹ work well here, though the nuances and details of the research need not be addressed directly. Instructors more daring than myself could even devise a world history course whose units of study are based principally on critical climate changes (see **Figure 2**). Lastly, microbial diseases are also essential to an environmental narrative. Disease is at once a theme with modern relevance, engaging storylines, and global scope. And, as will be shown below, the spread and circulation of disease is also a theme that fits together well with my third core theme of Exchange.

Falling short of making the environment a foundational element of world history, instructors would do well to simply acknowledge

the environmental dimensions of some of the more crucial events of world history. For example, I have found that putting the Columbian Exchange at the center of my lessons on the world economy in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries to be an excellent way of globalizing and balancing the narrative of exploration, conquest, trade, and colonization. The worldwide exchange of plants, animals, and diseases that followed in the wake of Columbus's voyages to the New World makes a great foundation from which to build an examination of the next several centuries of global history. Similarly, the Medieval Warm Period is a fruitful way to frame the economic and demographic recovery across Afro-Eurasia in the tenth to thirteenth centuries, just as the wild and unpredictable changes of the emerging Anthropocene works to frame world history since the early nineteenth century.

Finally, there is much to be gained by simply using the various environments and landscapes of the Earth as units of analysis. If one of the goals of the world history survey is to force students to think critically and globally (like world historians!), there are few better ways to start than by abolishing fully the system of using civilizations as units of analysis. Recently, I have experimented with using landscapes and biomes as the foundational unit of study in my world history courses. When political bodies become the predominant unit of focus, which is all too often the case in history instruction, so much of world history is lost—the movement of people and goods, the mutability of cultures, and the circulation of ideas are all minimalized. The large-scale processes and transformations that make up world history rarely pay any heed to national borders, but are often given shape by landscapes. Jerry Bentley's work is informative here. His vision of world history was one that pushed well beyond the limiting scope of nations and empires as a unit of analysis. Bentley's 1999 essay in *The Geographic Review* made the case for seas and ocean basins as especially useful units of analysis.²² I would add to his list deserts, steppe regions, and mountains as similarly dynamic environments that work well as units of study.²³ Such environments, which appear harsh and imposing at first glance, have acted more often as conduits rather than barriers to human ambitions. These landscapes have facilitated robust long-distance exchanges that, when considered, shatter typical conceptions of geographic divisions.²⁴

Core Theme #3: Exchange

A world history survey course must walk a fine line. On the one hand, there is an imperative to stress the fluid and mutable nature of the human experience—to underscore the exchanges, migrations, and instances of cross-cultural syncretism that have given shape to history on a global scale. On the other hand, there is a real need to create narrow and discrete units of study for the sake of clarity and student comprehension. Teaching to neat and tidy eras or civilizations no doubt aids students in this regard. However, the promotion of such artificial units of analysis can only serve to undermine the dynamism of world history. There are several ways to ameliorate this conflict.²⁵ Energy regimes are one way forward, as discussed. Considering humanity's connection to the environment is another. A third way forward is to adopt exchange networks as units of study and the process of exchange itself as a theme of history.

The cross-cultural interaction model championed by Jerry Bentley remains one of the better articulated methods of organizing a world history course around a theme of exchange and interaction. Such an approach offers a way to compartmentalize the past around specific circuits or instances of exchange, while at the same time emphasizing fluidity, change, and the porous nature of geographic and political borders. Bentley rightly identified exchange as a central motor of historical change. He explored this idea in his monograph, *Old World Encounters*, and exchange would later become the overarching theme of his hugely popular world history textbook, *Traditions & Encounters*, co-authored with Herbert Zeigler.²⁶ Following Bentley's model, the seemingly impassable continental and oceanic boundaries that appear to divide the Earth fade away under the relentless traffic of merchants, missionaries, and migrants. By stressing exchange networks as units of study—rather than the civilizations that make up the constituent parts of exchange networks—students are forced to look beyond often artificial or wholly imaginary political borders to a greater whole. But perhaps even more importantly, in focusing on exchange networks, students are gaining insight into our species' most powerful tool for innovation—collective learning and the exchange of ideas.

Historian David Christian identifies the ability to learn collectively across space and time—that is, to share information from generation to generation and from individual to individual—as our species’ most potent tool for adaptation and survival.²⁷ More than that, our ability to learn collectively as a species is what gives us culture and, therefore, history. When applying collective learning and exchange networks to the world history survey, we find that, indeed, the leading centers of innovation and cultural change are nearly always centered within expansive and well-connected networks of exchange. The relationship between dynamic socio-cultural change and the presence of robust exchange networks are clear when studying, say, the Hellenistic World, the great *Pax Mongolica* of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Atlantic World Economy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Islamic “Golden Age” of the ninth through thirteenth centuries, and the various iterations of Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and East Asian exchange networks. Each of these regions and periods were marked by extraordinary social and cultural change brought about by sustained long-distance exchanges between a wide array of communities. Exchange can also be observed working on much smaller, yet no less significant, scales. For example, students should be shown that the small-scale exchanges between urban centers and rural peripheries were critical in the accumulation of wealth and the formation of elite power structures throughout most all of history after the Paleolithic.

Like Energy and the Environment, Exchange can be used as a theme that bridges the entire course. When discussing the modern global exchange network of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, students are readily able to identify patterns and trends that appeared much earlier in the course. Exchange networks, no matter the era or location, exhibit universal properties, such as divisions of labor, wealth and power inequalities, cultural transfer and syncretism, and often social and/or cultural conflict. These universal properties and processes present within long-distance exchange networks could be broadly labeled as “globalization.” Just because globalization in the literal sense did not begin until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries does not mean that the process of globalization cannot and should not be used as an overarching theme in a world history survey stretching back to the first agrarian communities (at least). Because exchange is a process, it can be studied across multiple periods and

on scales smaller than the global. Justin Jennings' *Globalizations in the Ancient World* is aptly suited to make this case to both students and instructors.²⁸ In this slim book, Jennings outlines the ways in which the process of globalization that is now associated almost exclusively with the modern post-industrial era is in fact an ancient process. Here, then, we have yet another means to make the whole of world history relevant and engaging to students in the classrooms of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, by using Exchange as a theme and tracing the roots of globalization—which seems such a modern phenomenon to students—back to the camel caravan traders of North Africa, or to the monsoon traders of the Indian Ocean, or to the movement of steppe nomads of Eurasia, world history gains a great deal of coherence as well.

More useful still, stressing Exchange as a theme (or motor) of history helps dismantle the primacy of artificial “Eras,” “Periods,” and “Ages” in world history. With Exchange as an overarching theme, instructors can instead plant the idea that titles like, say, the “Early Modern Period” are not in reality a temporal unit, but rather a *process*. To be sure, peoples experience any given “Era” or “Age” in myriad ways. The Early Modern Era was one experience for European colonial populations in North America, and an entirely different experience for sub-Saharan African peoples, and again Meso-American peoples, and again Pacific Island peoples, and so on across the globe. What binds peoples together in any given era is not time itself—that peoples existed at the same time as one another is a mere coincidence—but, rather, tangible processes. More often than not, it is the process of exchange that looms largest in this regard, for it is exchange that brings peoples together physically, cultivates divisions of labor, circulates goods, and transmits ideas. While no two cultures experienced the Early Modern Era—or any era—in the same way, most cultures were bound up and shaped by the same processes of exchange, whether it be through colonialism, slavery, piracy, plantation agriculture, or the extraction and circulation of precious metals, amongst a dozen other modes of exchange. The same approach can be used to make sense of the variety of experiences and conditions contained within the twenty-first-century world, the classical Mediterranean, pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, the “Axial Age,” the Atlantic World, and so on. This is all to say that stressing exchange networks as a unit

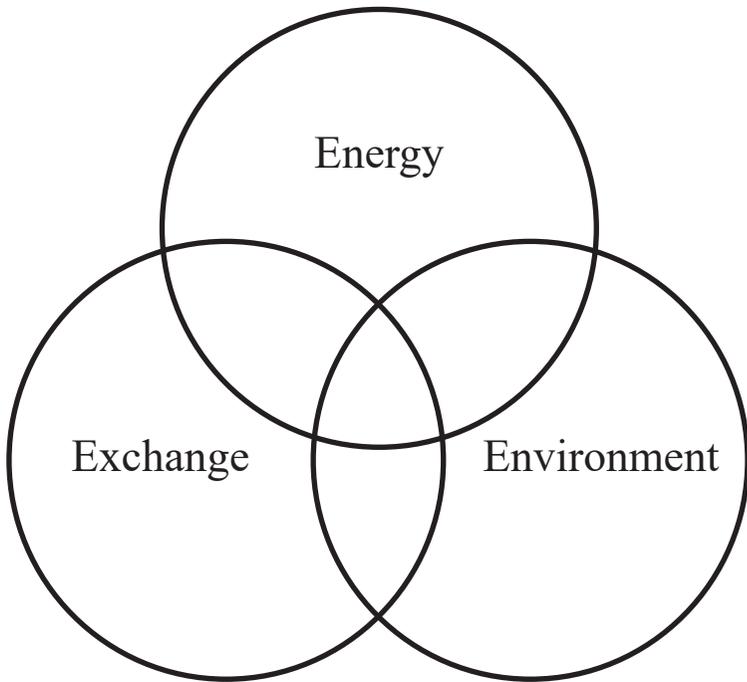


Figure 3: The “3E” Framework. Students and instructors can use the three-spheres model to explore the causes, context, and consequences of key developments in history at the global scale.

of analysis, or simply deploying exchange as a recurring theme, will force students to constantly reconsider how history changes from different points-of-view and how constituent parts make up a greater, often polycentric, whole.

Conclusion

The “3Es” of Energy, Environment and Exchange are not presented here as the definitive approach to world history curriculum design. The utility of these core themes rests in their high degree of flexibility and the freedom they provide instructors. They also possess synergy, with each theme feeding into the next in innumerable ways. Environments provide paths of exchange; energy regimes are forged from specific environments; ways of life

shape—and are shaped by—all three. I find it a useful exercise, for myself and my students, to think back to the “3Es” periodically throughout the course and to try to fit key developments into the framework they provide (see **Figure 3**). Students should consider how and in what ways key developments in world history have been shaped by various combinations of the 3Es. Where the Agricultural Revolution might be seen as a conjuncture of the Environment and Energy spheres, for example, the Columbian Exchange might then be understood as existing across spheres, with all three core themes playing a critical role in the transformation of the Old and New Worlds after 1492. The Industrial Revolution could likewise be seen as rooted principally in the Energy sphere, but with profound implications reaching out to the environment as well as our capacity to build exchange and transportation networks.

More than anything, I am proposing a way for instructors and students to think more carefully and purposefully about world history. And through a decidedly broad way of thinking, to be sure. The scope of my three themes are wide-ranging and the possible methods of their application to a world history curriculum are manifold. In using these three core themes, it is possible to construct a multitude of vastly different world history courses. However, any course built even loosely around the themes of Energy, Environment, and Exchange will find a clear way forward to transcending the common biases and over-played points-of-view that have for so long undermined efforts at creating a truly *global* history of humankind. Eurocentrism, the specter of the Western Civilization model, and the supremacy of the nation-state as historical unit are all significantly weakened with the application of these themes. At the same time, these three themes help to expose relevance, to cultivate student engagement, and to create overarching coherence, all of which are desperately needed in the world history survey.

Notes

1. William H. McNeill, "Beyond Western Civilization: Rebuilding the Survey," *The History Teacher* 10, no. 4 (August 1977): 509.

2. McNeill, "Beyond Western Civilization," 510.

3. At my own institution, Grand Valley State University, a liberal arts university in Michigan with over 25,000 students enrolled, there are roughly forty 100- and 200-level world history survey courses on offer each academic year. Each semester, between roughly 600 and 1,000 students take a world history survey course, which greatly surpasses enrollment in European history surveys and is marginally less than the enrollments for U.S. history survey courses.

4. Students at Grand Valley State University seeking a B.A. in History with a secondary teaching certificate are required to complete two 200-level world history courses as well as at least one "non-Western" 300-level course. Additionally, as per GVSU's General Education requirements, all B.A. undergraduates must complete a course listed under the "historical perspectives" foundation and a course that fulfills the "global perspectives" requirement, both of which are requirements that can be met with world history courses.

5. The number of students taking the AP World History exam has increased by over 330% from 2006 to 2016, making it one of the fastest growing AP programs in the nation. In 2016 alone, 285,351 students took the AP World History exam. College Board, "AP Exam Volume Changes (2006-2016)," <<https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/research/2016/2016-Exam-Volume-Change.pdf>>.

6. The myriad problems currently facing world history educators in the United States is best summarized in Robert Bain and Lauren McArthur Harris, "A Most Pressing Challenge: Preparing Teachers of World History," *Perspectives on History* 47, no. 7 (October 2009). See also the accompanying responses to Bain and Harris by Peter N. Stearns, Barbara Tischler, and Sharon Cohen in the same issue of *Perspectives on History*.

7. In 2018, the AP College Board announced their decision to cut the AP World History curriculum to a five-hundred-year scope, beginning with the discovery of the Americas. Since that announcement, there was significant pushback from scholars, including open letters and official statements from the American Historical Association, World History Association, Ross E. Dunn, David Christian, and Peter N. Stearns. The debate also received coverage in *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *The Washington Post*, CNN, Politico, and NPR, amongst many other outlets. In response to this pressure, the AP College Board has backtracked only slightly in beginning their curriculum in 1200 C.E. rather than 1500 C.E. This new truncated curriculum debuted in 2019 with a promise to develop an AP Ancient World History curriculum in the near future.

8. Published works that agonize over the "tyranny of the textbook" are numerous. Recent publications in this journal include Ryan A. Swanson, "A Relationship Analysis: A Professor, 500 Students, and an Assigned Textbook," *The History Teacher* 47, no. 2 (February 2014): 289-302; and Niels Eichhorn, "Teaching the Survey Non-Traditional Style," *The History Teacher* 46, no. 3 (May 2013): 435-454.

9. My colleague David Eaton recently examined the persistence of this “coverage model” in world history classrooms and came to lament the lack of specialized academic training in world history instruction and a widespread unwillingness on the part of instructors to depart from the safety of textbook narratives. Dave Eaton, “Taking Cover: Explaining the Persistence of the Coverage Model in World History Surveys,” *World History Connected* 13, no. 1 (February 2016), <<https://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/13.1/eaton.html>>.

10. The pedagogical stagnation of the world history survey course has not gone unnoticed. There are several articles now available that outline ways to overhaul the survey course to better cultivate critical thinking skills and to better stoke the interests of students. See Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, “The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model,” *Journal of American History* 97, no. 4 (March 2011): 1050-1066; Todd Estes, “Constructing the Syllabus: Devising a Framework for Helping Students Learn to Think like Historians,” *The History Teacher* 40, no. 2 (February 2007); Lendol Calder, “Looking for Learning in the History Survey,” *Perspectives on History* 40, no. 3 (March 2002); Anthony J. Steinhoff, “Taking the Next Step: World History and General Education on the American Campus,” *World History Connected* 3, no. 3 (July 2006); J. Laurence Hare and Jack Wells, “Promising the World: Surveys, Curricula, and the Challenge of Global History,” *The History Teacher* 48, no. 2 (February 2015): 371-388.

11. I prefer the term “energy regime” over “modes of production.” Energy Regimes can be taught as something intimately bound up in both the environment and culture, whereas “modes of production” implies a far more narrowly conceived economic process (to say nothing of the Marxist baggage associated with the term).

12. Stephen Morillo rightly argues for a similar schema in his essay, “Organizing World History,” *World History Connected* 15, no. 1 (February 2018) and in his world history textbook, *Frameworks of World History: Networks, Hierarchies, Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

13. There are just a handful of books that consider energy as the underlying motor of historical change. See especially Vaclav Smil, *Energy in World History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); and Vaclav Smil, *Energy and Civilization: A History* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017).

14. Figures from I. G. Simmons, *Changing the Face of the Earth: Culture, Environment, History*, second ed. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell, 1996), 27. Data reprinted in David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, second ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 141.

15. A number of exceptions to nomadism can be discussed, especially when it comes to littoral and riverine communities of the Paleolithic that were able to sustain sedentary ways-of-life through foraging resources from both the land and water.

16. Many societies that transitioned from a hunting-gathering regime to an early agricultural regime left abundant archeological evidence showing that the quality of life declined significantly, with noticeable reductions in nutrition, average height, and life expectancy. At the same time, we see increasing varieties of communicable diseases and social stresses as agrarian village/town life emerges.

17. Marshall Sahlins, "The Original Affluent Society," in *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2017).

18. Margaret Ehrenberg, *Women in Prehistory* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989). The relevant passages of Ehrenberg's work are included in Kevin Reilly, *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader*, sixth ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017).

19. Barry Cunliffe, *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). The idea that the environment "constrains" and "empowers" civilizations is argued throughout this work.

20. Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, third ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

21. Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

22. Jerry H. Bentley, "Seas and Ocean Basins as Frameworks of Historical Analysis," *The Geographic Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1999): 215-224.

23. Fernand Braudel explored both the sea and mountains as distinct environments of mobility and exchange in his history of the Mediterranean. In his masterful three-volume study of the early modern world, Braudel aptly called the central Eurasian steppe an "endless explosive fuse." Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th-18th Centuries, Volume I*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 94. See also Barry Cunliffe's *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean* for a consideration of the role of various landscapes in history.

24. See Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

25. Johnathan T. Reynolds, "Motion as an Organizing Principle in World History," *World History Connected* 15, no. 1 (February 2018).

26. Jerry H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

27. See David Christian, *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity* (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire, 2008). See also Christian, *Maps of Time*.

28. Justin Jennings, *Globalizations and the Ancient World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Appendix A: Recommended Readings for World History Survey Instructors

General World History

For instructors looking to get a broader understanding of the evolution of world history as a discipline, there are a number of outstanding resources. Ross E. Dunn, Laura J. Mitchell, and Kerry Ward, eds., *The New World History: A Field Guide For Teachers and Researchers*, second ed. (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016) is a comprehensive reader that excerpts critical works in the fields of pedagogy and research from the late nineteenth century to the present. Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) is a rigorous survey of the numerous branches of world history, as well as related disciplines that have shaped and been shaped by world history, though it is now in need of updating.

For a more analytical consideration of world history—its limits, strengths, and various structures—see Marnie Hughes-Warrington, ed., *Palgrave Advances in World Histories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

For works that challenge and critically dismantle popular yet antiquated and/or misguided approaches to world history, I recommend J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographic Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993); Andre Gunder-Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); and Martin Lewis and Kären Wigan, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

The emerging fields of “Big History” and “Deep History” have much to teach world historians about incorporating the themes of Energy, Environment, and Exchange. See David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, second ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011) and Andrew Shyrock and Daniel Lord Smail, *Deep History: The Architecture of Past and Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011) for good introductions to these respective fields.

The works of Fred Spier are also of great aid in re-imagining the scope and structure of macro-scale history. See Fred Spier, *The Structure of Big History: From the Big Bang until Today* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 1996) and Fred Spier, *Big History and the Future of Humanity* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

When it comes to more practical considerations of pedagogy, there are several resource books available for instructors that offer critical discussions of lesson plans, syllabi, and course design for world history

surveys. Heidi Roupp, ed., *Teaching World History in the 21st Century: A Resource Book* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2010) is a good resource for instructors new to world history. See also the similarly titled, Heidi Roupp, ed., *Teaching World History: A Resource Book* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), which offers a vastly differing collection of essays from the 2010 edition. Antoinette Burton's *A Primer for Teaching World History: Ten Design Principles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) is especially useful for its extended discussions of connectivity and periodization. Also of great practical use for course design is the *World History For Us All* website (<https://whfua.history.ucla.edu/>), which contains a wealth of free teaching material structured around a carefully constructed curriculum with accompanying texts available for purchase.

Textbooks

Textbooks should be used with care, but can be of vital aid to instructors as well as students. While the choice to assign a textbook is a personal one (and the merits of doing so are still very much debated—see Swanson, “A Relationship Analysis”; Eichhorn, “Teaching the Survey Non-Traditional Style”; and Eaton, “Taking Cover”), there are several mass-market texts that jibe well with the core themes and objectives I have outlined above. Many instructors, especially those new to teaching world history, would be well served in reading these texts and/or referring to them as they construct lesson plans.

Ross E. Dunn and Laura J. Mitchell's *Panorama: A World History* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2014) is among the better world history textbooks of the current generation. I have assigned various portions of *Panorama* in both halves of my world history surveys these last two years and have found that students respond well to its scope and presentation. The narrative abandons completely the standard disjointed approach of building each chapter around a single civilization or region. Each chapter of *Panorama* is global, or at the very least hemispheric, in scope. Ultimately, this text provided an adroit scaffolding to my lessons, and helped steer me and my students through the course while supplementing my three core themes well.

Also of great utility for instructors is Stephen Morillo's *Frameworks of World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), which attempts what no other mass-market world history text has yet done—to relate world history through a working structural model. Morillo reveals the grand flow of history as a working of “hierarchies” and “networks” and adopts a very similar approach to compartmentalizing history in terms of ways-of-life that I have outlined here.

The last of the current world history texts that adopt a genuinely global presentation is Felipe Fernández-Armesto's *The World: A History*, which had a third edition release in 2016. Fernández-Armesto's *The World* also breaks with the civilization-to-civilization schema and instead offers a far more inclusive account that considers the environment and exchanges as integral to the story of human history.

Also, honorable mention to the multi-authored *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*, which was recently given a facelift as a concise edition: Elizabeth Pollard, Clifford Rosenberg, and Robert Tignor, *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: From the Beginnings of Humankind to the Present*, Concise High School ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2015).

Energy, Environment, and Exchange

Useful works that explicitly address energy in world history are few. Vaclav Smil's *Energy in World History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994) offers perhaps the most direct and unambiguous consideration of energy regimes in world history. There is also Smil's more recently published *Energy and Civilization: A History* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017). William F. Ruddiman's *Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum: How Humans Took Control of Climate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010) presents an excellent examination of energy use as it relates to climate change.

For a more balanced world history narrative that considers agrarian and industrial energy systems as well as the role of the environment generally, see Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, third ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). Marks' work is aptly suited for students and offers an engaging and streamlined narrative that incorporates recent world history scholarship. This work is tailor-made for a world history survey course beginning with 1500 C.E. Students will also find David Christian's *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity* (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire, 2008) a useful and (very) brief narrative of world history organized around Paleolithic, Agrarian, and Industrial energy regimes.

When it comes to environmental history, the seminal (but somewhat dated) works that first launched the field remain excellent reading. Alfred Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, 30th Anniversary Edition (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003) and *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, second ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) remain outstanding works despite their age and should be required reading for world history instructors.

The role of landscapes and ecologies throughout history are brought front-and-center in several works, including Felipe Fernández-Armesto's *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature* (New York: Free Press, 2001). There is also Clive Ponting, *A New Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations* (New York: Penguin, 2007).

For similar considerations of landscapes and ecologies in the pre-modern world, see the richly illustrated *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) by Barry Cunliffe.

Within the field of environmental history, global climate change is a topic of growing interest to scholars of world history. Some relevant and notable works along these lines include John L. Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Brian Fagan, *The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); and Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

There are an increasing number of works on modern energy consumption and its impact on climate that may be especially useful in a post-1500 world history survey. There is of course John R. McNeill's *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: Norton, 2000). While its scope strictly adheres to the twentieth century, *Something New Under the Sun* works well as a general catalog of environmental changes in the fossil fuel age. A more updated book, and certainly more concise, is Jeremy Davies, *The Birth of the Anthropocene* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), which brings together discussions of climate science, geology, history, and human energy use.

The number of works on exchanges and interactions in world history is vast. J. R. McNeill and William H. McNeill's *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye-View of World History* (New York: Norton, 2003) is an excellent and accessible narrative that stresses exchanges and connections as the central theme of global history and is aptly suited for assigned student reading. The greatest proponent for cross-cultural interaction as a dominant driving force in world history was Jerry Bentley. His *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) remains a useful source. Students, however, might find Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, eds., *The World that Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present*, second ed. (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2006) a more readable account of exchange. This work also reads well in excerpts. There is also

Charles C. Mann, *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created* (New York: Knopf, 2011), which is among the more engaging reads on early modern global exchanges.

Considerations of a more theoretical and technical nature are discussed in the various works on world-systems theory. A good place to start is Barry K. Gills and Andre Gunder-Frank, eds., *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (New York: Routledge, 1993). A more accessible work in this vein is Thomas Shannon's *Introduction to the World-System Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

For discussions of exchange in the ancient world, see Justin Jennings' *Globalizations and the Ancient World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Jennings makes the case for connections and exchanges as profound sources of change in the Ancient as well as Modern eras. Jennings' book works well as either an instructor resource or assigned student reading.

Appendix B: Course Outline for a World History to 1500 Survey

World History to 1500

Required Texts

Ross E. Dunn and Laura J. Mitchell, *Panorama: A World History* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2014).

Kevin Reilly, *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader, Vol. 1: To 1550*, sixth ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017).

Week 1: The Paleolithic

(200,000 years ago – 10,000 years ago)

- How did human communities sustain themselves in the Paleolithic Era across various environments? In what ways was Paleolithic culture shaped by a hunting-gathering energy regime?
- What role did climate change and landscapes play in hominid evolution generally and the migration of *Homo sapiens* specifically?
- What were the typical gender roles in the Paleolithic? What types of evidence do scholars use to reconstruct the lives of our Paleolithic ancestors?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 1, “The Peopling of the World”
Reilly, “Were the First Artists Mostly Women?”

Week 2: The Neolithic and Early Agriculture

(c. 10,000 years ago – 5,000 years ago)

- How and why did a handful of communities begin farming c. 10,000 years ago? What factors facilitated the emergence of agriculture after hundreds of thousands of years of foraging?
- How did society, culture, and ways-of-life change in communities that began to adopt farming?
- What advantages and disadvantages did Neolithic agriculture offer early farming communities when compared to their Paleolithic, hunter-gatherer ancestors?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 2, “Farms, Cities, and the New Agrarian Age”
Reilly, “Women in Prehistory”

Week 3: The First Cities and States

(c. 3500 – 2000 B.C.E.)

- How and why did the first urban communities appear? What specific factors enabled the emergence of cities and states?
- What is a city? What is a state? How and in what ways was the culture within early urban environments different from that of Neolithic farming communities?
- What role did connections and exchanges with surrounding rural and foraging communities play in sustaining the social complexity of urban areas?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 2, “Farms, Cities, and the New Agrarian Age”
Reilly, “Cities and Civilization”
Reilly, “Hammurabi’s Code”

Week 4: Agrarian and Pastoral Societies of Ancient Afro-Eurasia

(c. 3500 – 1500 B.C.E.)

- What were the various relationships between sedentary agrarian communities and nomadic pastoralist communities across Afro-Eurasia?
- How, why, and in what ways did culture and social organizations differ between agrarian and pastoral communities? How were such societies organized?
- How did the domestication of the horse on the Pontic-Caspian steppe c. 4,000 B.C.E. impact the larger history of Eurasia up to c. 1000 B.C.E.? Consider exchanges and warfare specifically.

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 3, “Afroeurasia’s Moving Frontiers: Farmers, Herders, and Charioteers”

Week 5: The Ancient Americas and Australasia

(c. 3500 – 1500 B.C.E.)

- How, why, and in what ways did early agriculture in the Americas differ from agriculture in Afro-Eurasia? How did the environments of the Americas compare to those of Afro-Eurasia?
- How did the earliest cities and states of the Americas compare to those of Afro-Eurasia? How can we account for any similarities or differences in culture or social structure?

- How did peoples of Australasia adapt to and/or reshape their environments? What distinct ways-of-life emerged in Australia and Papua New Guinea?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 4, “Early Odysseys in the Americas, Australia, and Oceania”
 Reilly, “First City in the New World?”

Week 6: Connections across Ancient Afro-Eurasia

(c. 1500 – 500 B.C.E.)

- Compare the long-distance exchange networks across Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. How did trade and cross-cultural exchange operate in these two regions?
- How did the largest states and empires of Afro-Eurasia manage trade, transportation, and cross-cultural interactions? What role did such connections play in agrarian states?
- What religions/philosophies did states adopt across Afro-Eurasia prior to 500 B.C.E.? What virtues and taboos did they espouse? Why?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 5, “Afroeurasia: Centers of Power, Trade, and New Ideas”
 Reilly, “The Rig Veda: Sacrifice as Creation”
 Reilly, “The Upanishads: Karma and Reincarnation”
 Reilly, “The Upanishads: Brahman and Atman”

Week 7: Persia, the Hellenistic World, and Rise of a “Classical Age”

(c. 600 B.C.E. – 100 C.E.)

- How did the Persian Empire manage its size, complexity and diversity? How and why was Persia able to grow to such tremendous size and control such a large population?
- What was the “Hellenistic World”? In what ways did the various cultures of the Mediterranean, North Africa, Western Asia, Central Asia, and Northern India interact?
- How, why, and to what extent did agrarian civilizations across Eurasia experience a period of “Classical Era” growth? What role did non-agrarian cultures play in this growth? Did all peoples experience a “Classical Age”?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 6, “Empire Building and Cultural Exchange from India to the Mediterranean”
Reilly, “Greek and Indian Civilization”

Week 8: The Silk Roads and Indian Ocean World in the Era of Rome and the Han

(200 B.C.E. – 200 C.E.)

- Compare the social and cultural structures found in the Mediterranean and in East Asia. How did states in these two agrarian hubs manage their size and complexity?
- What role did the Silk Road exchange networks play in sustaining the growth and complexity of agrarian civilizations? What role did nomadic pastoralists play in sustaining trans-continental trade?
- How was the Monsoon trading system of the Indian Ocean world organized politically, economically, and culturally? How did the environment regulate human activity in the Indian Ocean world?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 7, “An Age of Giant Empires”
Reilly, “The Analects”
Reilly, “Daoism: The Way and the Power”
Reilly, “Legalism”

Week 9: Growing Complexity in the American and Pacific Worlds

(800 B.C.E. – 800 C.E.)

- How did “Classical Era” agrarian civilizations of Mesoamerica like the Maya, Zapotec, and Teotihuacan differ from earlier societies in the region? Did the Americas enjoy a “Classical Age?”
- How did the remote Pacific Islands come to be inhabited? What evidence do we have that shows where Pacific Islanders originated and how they navigated the vast Pacific?
- How did native peoples of the Mississippi watershed manage their environment and build a robust exchange network? What evidence do we have?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 8, “American Complexities”
Reilly, “Austronesian, Indo-European, and Bantu Migrations”

Week 10: The Spread of Universal Religions

(c. 300 B.C.E. – 1000 C.E.)

- What are “Universal Religions”? How and why did these new ideologies spread so far so quickly? How do Universal Religions differ from earlier polytheistic traditions?
- Compare the teachings of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Are there similar teachings across all three religions? Why would this be the case?
- How did states react to the spread of Universal Religions? In what cases were these faiths adopted and/or rejected by states? Why?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 9, “Turbulent Centuries”
 Reilly, “Life of Constantine”
 Reilly, “Buddhism & Caste”
 Reilly, “Mahayana Buddhism: The Lotus Sutra”

Week 11: The Islamic “Golden Age”

(c. 600 – 1000 C.E.)

- Account for the emergence and early spread of Islam. How and why did Islam spread so far and so quickly?
- How and why did cross-cultural exchange and long-distance interactions intensify under the early Islamic Caliphates? Consider the role of Islamic teachings and the environment.
- Account for the growth of Damascus and Baghdad in the centuries after Islam’s founding. How and why did these cities grow into such influential hubs?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 10, “Afroeurasia in the Age of Arab Empire”
 Reilly, “Selections from the Quran”
 Reilly, “The Islamization of the Silk Road”

Week 12: An Age of “Post-Classical” Connections and Interactions

(1000 – 1350 C.E.)

- Compare and contrast the sub-Saharan empires of Mali and Ghana. What role did trade and the environment play in shaping these two states economically and culturally?

- What were the Crusades? How would you characterize the different relationships between Christians and Muslims in the Eastern Mediterranean from 1000 to 1300 C.E.?
- How, why, and under what circumstances did the peoples of Scandinavia establish connections with the Mediterranean, Greenland, Iceland, Eastern Europe, and North America?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 12, “Dynamic Centuries across Afroeurasia”

Reilly, “Ibn Battuta: Travels”

Reilly, “The First Crusade”

Reilly, “A Muslim History of the First Crusade”

Week 13: The Mongols and their Legacy

(1100 – 1450 C.E.)

- How and why did the Mongols come to dominate such a large expanse of Afro-Eurasia? How did the relatively small number of Mongol conquerors rule over subjugated peoples?
- What were the long-term consequences of the Mongol conquests for the peoples of Afro-Eurasia? Consider economic, cultural, and political transformations.
- What were the origins of the “Black Death?” Consider the spread of Bubonic Plague in terms of “accident,” “contingency,” and “conjuncture.”

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 13, “Afroeurasia in the Era of Mongol Power”

Reilly, “The Secret History of the Mongols”

Reilly, “History of the Mongols”

Week 14: Growth and Recovery in the “Early Modern Era”

(1400 – 1600 C.E.)

- Compare the Aztec and Incan Empires in terms of the environments they occupied. How were Lake Texcoco and the Andes Mountains made to support such large populations?
- How did the Ming Dynasty organize and administer one of the largest populations in the world in the fifteenth century? Consider specific institutions and philosophies of governance.

- What was the “Early Modern Era”? Did all peoples experience this era in the same way?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 14, “Cities and Empires in the Americas”

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 15, “Calamities and Recoveries across Afroeurasia”

Week 15: Global Cross-Cultural Encounters

(1400 – 1600 C.E.)

- What was the political and economic balance of power across Afro-Eurasia in 1492? What was the balance of power between the Old World and New World in 1492?
- How and why did Europeans establish the first global exchange networks?
- Compare and contrast the European experience in the Americas versus the European experience in South, Southeast, and East Asia up to 1600 C.E. How and why did European endeavors in the Americas differ from those in Afro-Eurasia in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries?

Readings:

Dunn and Mitchell, Chapter 16, “Oceans Crossed, Worlds Connected”