

Course: **THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN WORLD: WORLD HISTORY SINCE 1500**  
Instructor: Kyle E. David  
Course level: Lower-level undergraduate survey  
Enrollment: 20 – 30+

How did the world as we know it today come to be? What do words like “modernity” and “globalization” mean? How have ordinary individuals experienced and thought about the monumental changes that have taken place over the last five hundred years? This course proposes tentative answers to these questions by examining events that include the industrial revolution, the birth of nations and nationalisms, and global conflicts. In the process, we will touch on topics such as imperialism and colonialism, technological innovation, environmental change, and the struggle for self-determination.

This course emphasizes the evaluation of historical documents, through which students will learn to think about change over time. In addition to a wide variety of textual sources, students will use material culture to construct evidence-based arguments. Such objects include: maps and globes, luxury goods, tea and coffee houses, modernist artwork, and classical music. The textbook assigned for this course is Ross E. Dunn and Laura J. Mitchell’s *Panorama: A World History*. Additionally, students will complete a project based on their selection of a historical individual or social group. At the end of the semester, students will present on their individual/group, incorporating materials from lecture, readings, and in-class discussions. Potential subjects may include but are not limited to Catherine the Great, Frida Kahlo, Primo Levi, Nelson Mandela, Indira Nehru Gandhi, Mao Zedong, Franz Fanon, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Examples of historical literature include Adam Hochschild’s *King Leopold’s Ghost*, Yuan-Tsung Chen’s *The Dragon’s Village*, and Min Jin Lee’s *Pachinko*.

Week 1: Oceans Crossed, Worlds Connected, 1450 – 1550  
Week 2: Afroeurasia and Its Powerful States, 1500 – 1600  
Week 3: The Expanding Global Economy: Expectations and Inequalities, 1550 – 1700  
Week 4: The Changing Balance of Wealth and Power, 1650 – 1750  
Week 5: Waves of Revolution, 1720 – 1830  
Week 6: Energy and Industrialization, 1750 – 1850  
Week 7: Coping with Change in the New Industrial Era, 1830 – 1870  
Week 8: Review and Mid-term Exam  
Week 9: Capital, Technology, and the Changing Balance of Global Power, 1860 – 1914  
Week 10: Innovation, Revolution, and Global Crisis, 1890 – 1920  
Week 11: Turbulent Decades, 1918 – 1935  
Week 12: World War II and Its Aftermath, 1933 – 1950  
Week 13: The Global Boom and Its Contradictions, 1945 – 1975  
Week 14: Countercurrents of Change, 1970 to the Present  
Week 15: Into the Anthropocene, 1800 to the Present  
Week 16: Course Wrap Up