

The Student Syllabus – World History since 1850

Working from *A Moral History of Western Society* – Volume Two

Questions to consider in doing the readings

1st Quarter – From Glory to Military Disaster

Unit 1 - pp. 1-35 (Glory-1)

Who were the key individuals shaping the amazing political rise in the 1800s of France, Italy, Germany, England and Russia? What tragedy fell on America in the mid-1800s? How was the development of an overseas empire a matter of such urgency to these European powers ... and how did they proceed in this matter? What kind of problems developed in South Africa as a result? What about the disaster in Mexico?

Unit 2 - pp. 35-66 (Glory-2)

How did this Western imperialist urge work in China ... and elsewhere in East Asia? What about the Middle East? And Africa?

What economic and social complications were developing in the meantime back home in England, France, Austria-Hungary, Spain, Russia, Turkey ... and America? What was the general picture of Western society as it found itself about to enter the 20th century?

Unit 3 - pp. 67-96 (The "Great War" / World War One)

Why were European leaders having such difficulty in understanding the social forces stirring under them in their home countries? How did this undercut political authority in Russia ... and then in Turkey? How did the obvious weakening of the hand of the Turkish sultan lead to conflict in the Balkan region? How did this in turn begin to divide the European powers into two opposing alliances? What was the event that finally exploded these growing tensions into full-scale war between the two groups (the "Great War" ... or World War One)?

How very quickly did it appear that this murderous war was taking no one to glory? How did all this finally collapse royal authority in Russia ... and with what immediate consequences? How did America eventually become involved? How did President Wilson attempt to turn this murderous lunacy into a great moral-political crusade for world democracy? What happened rather quickly to the Russian democracy that was supposed to arise with the fall of the Russian monarchy?

Unit 4 - pp. 97-131 (Attempts at Recovery)

How did all this plunge Russia into a long civil-war (1917-1922)? What were the "peace" terms imposed on the central powers by England and France ... and what was Wilson's reaction to this development? How did Wilson's hope fare that a new international organization (his League of Nations) might soon correct matters? But how did other military conflicts flare up as a result of the political outcome of the war? What did Turkey do in response to the war's outcome? How did Britain recover? What was up with the Irish? What happened in post-War France ... and the new German Weimar Republic ... and in the small remnant country Austria? How did "dictatorship" so easily develop in Poland and Italy? What developed in the new Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia?

What happened abroad, in India, China, Iran, and Japan? Why did America now find itself so deeply divided between rural America and America ... and why did it leave the country so insecure spiritually?

Meanwhile, what new breakthrough in scientific thought emerged at this time?

Unit 5 - pp. 132-153 (Depression ... and More Dictatorship)

What were the economic causes of the Great Depression? What was Roosevelt's "New Deal" in America ... and what were its ultimate results? What was the impact of the depression on Britain, France, and other European countries? What was behind the seeming economic success of Stalin's "Communist" programming in Russia? How did Hitler and his Nazis take advantage of the economic and social confusion caused by the depression ... to ultimately take over Germany? Why was the Spanish Civil War in effect something of a "dry run" on the coming World War Two?

Unit 6 - pp. 154-176 (World War – Round Two-1)

Why was the West's response to Mussolini's aggressions in Ethiopia so tepid? What was developing in Gandhi's India? What was happening at the upper level of Japanese politics ... that resulted in the Japanese aggressions against China? Why was France having a hard time getting its political act together? Why was Britain so caught up with the idea of "appeasement" in response to the rapid rise of Hitler's German Reich? How did such appeasement play out for Austria and Czechoslovakia ... and the German Jewish population? Why did Stalin decide to ally with Hitler ... and begin the outbreak of a new world war with their mutual assault on Poland?

Why did the war at first go so poorly for Western Europe? Why was Britain able to hold out against the Nazi assault? Why was America so "neutral" at this point ... and what nonetheless did Roosevelt do in order to help Western Europe as much as he could? Why did Hitler decide to attack Stalin's Russia? What finally brought America into the war?

How did things go at first for the Western powers in the Asian and Pacific regions? What finally began to turn things around against the Japanese? What was Gandhi doing during all of this?

Unit 7 - pp. 177-198 (World War – Round Two-2)

Why did the Western allies decide to move against the Axis powers (Germany and Italy) at first in the North African region? How did that go? What did the Italians themselves do in the face of a Western advance? But why was moving forward in Italy so hard? What finally developed there?

How was it that Russia was able to stop Hitler's expansion in the East ...and begin a German rollback there? Why, having successfully landed a huge army at Normandy, did the Allies decide to head to Paris rather than due East to a retreating Germany? Why the decision to invade Germany from the North ... and how did that work out? Meanwhile, how was "island hopping" against Japan in the Pacific working out? But why was it such slow going?

What political measures were taken by the Allies (the "United Nations") to begin preparations for a post-war world? How did Truman prove to be a very excellent follow-up president when Roosevelt suddenly died? Why did the British abandon Churchill just as the war was ending?

Unit 8 - pp. 199-236 (The Postwar World)

What were the immediate challenges facing the post-war world ... and how were they dealt with? How did the post-war world take shape in America politically and socially? How did Britain and France try to rebuild? What about the other nations finding themselves located in what would soon be termed "Western Europe"? How did things then take shape in Eastern Europe?

How and why was it that numerous Asian peoples found themselves able to move away from their former status as parts of the empires (or "dependencies") of the British, French, Dutch – and even Americans – to the new status as independent nations? What were the political results for these countries?

How did the war inspire the birth of the new state of Israel – and what were the complicating factors involved ... ones never truly resolved, even to this day?

Unit 9 - Review

2nd Quarter – The Cold War ... and the Age of America

Unit 1 - pp. 237-265 (A Cold War Develops-1)

How did early signs of a pending "Cold War" show up in post-war Iran, Greece and Turkey? Why did Americans have a hard time understanding Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech? How did post-war labor problems in Western Europe play into this unfolding drama? What was the Marshall Plan all about ... and how did the Soviets respond? How was the Czech coup a wakeup call for Americans? How did Tito impact things? How did Truman respond to the Berlin Blockade ... and how did NATO result from all this? How did the Korean War serve as a surrogate war for the Cold War adversaries? How did Truman handle the Korean matter ... and even handle MacArthur?

Why did the word "democracy" stir Cold War emotions even deeper? What, meanwhile, did Western Europe do to construct a new sense of regional unity economically ... but with strong social-political implications? What happened to the "Christian world" in all of this ... especially in America?

Unit 2 - pp. 266-300 (A Cold War Develops-2 / A Bi-Polar World-1)

What kind of shift in global dynamics followed quickly upon Stalin's death? How did political change in both Iran and Indochina change the political balance in the Cold War ... and how did a "Third World" group of nations develop in order to indicate their neutrality in the Cold War? How did the rearming of West Germany deepen the military divide in the Cold War? How did simultaneous events in Hungary and Egypt throw deep confusion into all this Cold War dynamic? How in turn did this impact Britain, France, America and Soviet Russia diplomatically? Why was America less hesitant in playing the power game when it came to events in the Western hemisphere (Central and South America)?

What was the next big step of Western European nations in moving to closer unity? Why did Britain hesitate to join in? How did the Congo Crisis put the United Nations to the test as an international peacekeeper? What happened to the efforts of Eisenhower and Khrushchev to then try to bring the world closer to global peace? Why did de Gaulle want to set France down a new political-diplomatic path? How did the young Kennedy fare in trying to put a new look to American diplomacy? How did he at first stumble ... then recover America's big-power image when Khrushchev misjudged Kennedy over the Cuban-missiles matter? Why was Indochina becoming an ever-bigger problem? What ended the Kennedy presidency? How in the meantime was America undergoing deep changes in its social-spiritual foundations?

Unit 3 - pp. 300-332 (A Bi-Polar World-2)

What did Johnson think he was going to achieve with his "Great Society" program? What was he trying to do in Vietnam? How did that work out for everyone? What was Mao trying to achieve in China with his "Great Leap Forward" ... then with his "Cultural Revolution"? In what ways did de Gaulle attempt to undercut American leadership in the West (and Anglo culture in general)? What was the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War all about? Why, in so many ways, was 1968 truly an *annus horribilis* (horrible year)? Why was much the same turmoil duplicated in Europe that same year? What was the outcome for both America and Soviet Russia?

How, at this point, was the European unity movement able to resume its growth? Why was Nixon's (and Kissinger's) philosophy of *Realpolitik* so poorly understood by Americans ... despite Nixon's obvious success in getting America out of its Vietnam mess? How was political ideology replacing political strategy as the motif in American politics in the early 1970s? What was Watergate all about? How did this all impact the new round of fighting that broke out in the Middle east at this same time? What was the tragic fallout for the Vietnamese and Cambodians when Congress believed it was doing the world a great favor in abruptly abandoning its involvement in Southeast Asia? How was this in keeping with a general "anti-conservative" social philosophy (especially strong in Congress and the Supreme Court) that supposedly "liberated" everyone? And what was the impact this was to have on America's Christian society?

Unit 4 - pp. 333-363 (Peace-1)

How did Carter's "more moral" presidency relate to the Panama Canal and to the Shah's Iran? How did something like that actually work in getting Israel and Egypt to come to a peace agreement? What was it that finally opened up Chinese society to the larger world? How did Carter's approach to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan itself look like Realpolitik in action? How did the fall of Iran's Shah throw the Western world into economic chaos ... and how did Volcker make things even worse with his high interest rate strategy? How did this finish off Carter ... and open the door for Reagan as US president? In what ways was Reagan's presidency a reaffirmation of Realpolitik (Lebanon, "no"; Granada "Yes")? How did Thatcher prove that Britain still knew how to play the Realpolitik game? What was the Iran-Contra Affair all about? How and why did the Soviet Empire – and the Soviet Union itself – collapse at the end of the 1980s? How was China able not to go down the same road as fellow Communist Russia?

Unit 5 - pp. 363-380 (Peace-2)

What were the newest steps West Europe was taking to bring itself to greater political as well as economic unity? How did Bush Sr's handling of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis (1990-1991) bring global respect for America as the world's sole superpower? But why was Bush not able to get himself reelected to office in 1992? Why did things continue to worsen for Russia ... but continue to improve dramatically for Europe and China during the 1990s? How and why did Clinton, who started out as a Boomer Idealist, switch to the continuation of the diplomacy of Realpolitik (Somalia, Oslo Accords, Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo)? How was it that the Muslim world was beginning to assert itself more vigorously in the global scheme of things?

Unit 6 - pp. 381-413 (The Troubled 21st Century-1)

What happened on "9/11" ... and what was the immediate political outfall of the event? Why did Bush Jr's determination to redo Iraq ultimately prove to be such a pointless and expensive disaster? What was it that was also reshaping the moral foundations of America's huge economy during this time period? What was the disastrous result of this (greedier) approach to life? Why did Bush Jr. believe that this justified an extensive federal government "rescue" of the American economy? How was this same moral slippage also impacting American society in general?

How did Obama (and the Supreme Court) intend to use this same "Progressive" moral dynamic as a basis to bring great "Change" to America? Why did this often embitter race relations in America? How meanwhile was the rising Muslim world thrown into its own moral-political turmoil as a result of the "Arab Spring"? What role did the West – most notably America – play in this matter?

Unit 7 - pp. 413-442 (The Troubled 21st Century-2)

How is it that Trump gained the Republican nomination for President in 2016? What was the reaction of the Democratic Party – and other "Progressives" – when he won the Presidency? How did the Covid 19 pandemic deeply challenge the world? What exactly was Trump trying to achieve in his four years as President?

What was it politically-socially that Biden brought to America in assuming the Presidency in 2021? How was Trump's reaction to his electoral loss so chaotic? What is America doing to answer the challenge of millions of "illegals" rushing its borders? What is anyone doing in the face of a rising challenge of China – and its expanding BRICS alliance – seeking to dethrone America and its dollar economy?

Unit 8 - pp. 443-471 (The Lessons of History)

Why do societies rise and fall? Why is the particular character of a society's leadership so important to the way a society goes at life and its challenges? How has modern technology changed deeply the way we moderns understand social dynamics ... in particular, what we view as constituting the "good" and the "bad"? What do "Progressives" hope will now serve as the moral foundations of the Western world, a world long built on strong Christian foundations, now that the Christian faith itself is clearly undergoing a huge decline in this "modern" culture? Do you believe that God has given up on modern civilization ... or is he likely to intervene with another "Great Awakening" to bring it out of its moral-spiritual confusion?

Unit 9 - Review