

# USU 1320 Geography and Civilization Or How to Conquer the World

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## **Introduction to the Course:**

In this course we will examine *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, by Niall Ferguson, in which details the potential reasons for the rise and domination of Western civilization, and how Western civilization might end. We will also be studying some of the chapters from Robert D. Kaplan's book *The Revenge of Geography*. Kaplan writes on the role of geopolitical theories in Western foreign policy making in the last several decades, and how geography might influence the policy making of states in the coming years. In addition to examining these books, we will study several factors (geography, economy, demography, military, political structure, etc.) that influence a state's policy decisions in order to determine how they might contribute the successes and failures of states. We will do this by looking at some of history's strongest civilizations.

In this course you will get a brief introduction to many different peoples that have lived on the earth. These civilizations will include some from antiquity, some from the modern ages, and some that exist today. We will look at their "rises" and their "falls," which is to say, why they grew and expanded in power, and also why they lost their power, or collapsed as a society altogether. The purpose is to ascertain what factors contribute to either phenomenon.

## **Course Objectives:**

1. Familiarize students with some of the diversity of civilizations that have inhabited the earth throughout human history.
2. Create awareness of the different fates of human civilizations.
3. Induce critical thinking about the reasons for the variable status and fates of civilizations.
4. Induce thinking about how the current inhabitants of our planet can cope or fail to cope with the challenges facing their own civilizations, and what the results might be.
5. Establish critical thinking skills.
6. Improve students' ability to express themselves orally and in writing.

## **Readings:**

You should purchase one text for this course:

*Civilization* (2011)  
Niall Ferguson  
Penguin Books  
ISBN 978-0-14-312206-7

All other readings will be provided by the instructor.

**Requirements:**

This course is going to ask you to demonstrate your critical thinking and communication skills through concise writing and discussion, and will encourage you to embrace careful study habits through lecture and reading quizzes.

Participation points will be awarded intermittently during class discussions and can also be earned by participating in the online discussion on Canvas. Points for participation in the online discussion can be earned by responding to the initial news story or for commenting on your peers' comments.

You will be assigned twelve quizzes over the course of the semester which will cover both reading and lecture content. Ten of these will be part of your final grade. The lowest two scores will be discarded. Quizzes will all be on canvas. They will be unlocked Thursday afternoons, and will be due before class starts on Friday. Quizzes will be timed—you will have only fifteen minutes to complete each quiz. Quizzes taken late will receive a zero. Each quiz will be worth twenty five points.

You will also be required to take a paper writing quiz. I will not grade your papers until you have passed this quiz with a perfect score, so you will need to retake the quiz until you get 100%. The paper writing quiz will be made available after the first week of class.

In addition to the quizzes, you will be assigned three short papers. They should be no longer than ONE page, single spaced, 12 pt. font, with one inch margins. Each paper is worth fifty points. Papers must be submitted via Canvas on the due date BEFORE CLASS BEGINS, or they will be considered late.

There will be one final assignment at the end of the semester worth one hundred points. For the final assignment you can choose any of the following:

- Group Presentation: Each group will select one of the civilizations we discussed during the semester and will present an in-depth analysis of *every one* of the elements of society that we discussed. The group presentation should be 5-8 minutes in length.
- Individual Presentation: You will select one of the following prompts and create a presentation on the prompt. The individual presentation should be 3-5 minutes in length.
  - Select one of the civilizations presented in class and describe how you would prevent it from failing.
  - Select one of the civilizations presented in class and explain why you think they were the most successful conquerors of their time.
  - Select four of the elements of society outlined in class and explain how you would use them to create your own civilization.

- Explain how you would prevent modern Western Civilization from eventually failing.
- Individual Paper: You will select one of the following prompts and write a paper on the prompt. The paper should be 3-5 pages in length.
  - Select one of the civilizations presented in class and describe how you would prevent it from failing.
  - Select one of the civilizations presented in class and explain why you think they were the most successful conquerors of their time.
  - Select four of the elements of society outlined in class and explain how you would use them to create your own civilization.
  - Explain how you would prevent modern Western Civilization from eventually failing.

**Grading Summary:**

Class Participation (15)	5 pts each	75 pts.
Paper Writing Quiz	25 pts. each	25 pts.
Quizzes (10)	25 pts. each	250 pts.
Short Papers (3)	50 pts. each	150 pts.
<u>Final Assignment</u>		<u>100 pts.</u>
Total		600 pts.

**Grade Scale:**

You can check your current grade at any time by dividing the points you have accumulated by the points possible. The resulting percentage can then be applied to the following scale:

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	64-67
B+	87-89	C	74-76	D-	60-63
B	84-86	C-	70-73	F	59

**Due Dates:**

Accompanying this syllabus is a course schedule with all of the assignment due dates. This means you know in advance if there is going to be a conflict with a wedding, family vacation, or some such other event. If that is the case you will be expected to turn in your writing assignments early. Late papers will lose five points for each day they are late. You will be able to drop two quiz scores this semester, so there will be no make-ups or early quizzes given

regardless of illness, weddings, family emergencies, or the like. I encourage you to plan accordingly.

### **Incomplete Policy:**

Incompletes are given for medical or other serious reasons. Simply miscalculating the time needed to complete the course is not a sufficient reason for an incomplete. You must contact me EARLY in the semester if you think your circumstances warrant an incomplete grade. Pleas in the last week of class do not hold a lot of credibility.

### **Academic Honesty:**

“Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the University by not participating in or facilitating others’ participation in any act of academic dishonesty and by reporting all violations or suspected violations of the Academic Integrity Standard to their instructors.

Violations of the Academic Integrity Standard (academic violations) include, but are not limited to:

**Cheating:** (1) using or attempting to use or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity, including working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done “individually”; (2) depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (3) substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work; (4) acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission; (5) continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity; (6) submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or (7) engaging in any form of research fraud.

**Falsification:** altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.

**Plagiarism:** representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.”<sup>1</sup>

**More About Plagiarism:** Do not plagiarize. Please. If you use the words or phrases of someone else they must be in quotations with a proper citation. If you use the ideas of someone else—even if you put them in your own words—you must still attribute the idea to them with proper citation. “Plagiarism is a very serious matter and, in some forms, is a violation of the law.

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<sup>1</sup> “Academic Honesty/Integrity,” *USU General Catalog 2011-2012*, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=265>.

Students have been expelled from the university for engaging in acts of plagiarism. The policy of the Political Science Department of USU in response to an initial act of plagiarism by a student is to give the students an ‘F’ grade for the assignment and record the act in the student’s departmental file. A second act of plagiarism in the same course will result in an ‘automatic’ receipt of ‘F’ grade for the course. Any subsequent acts of plagiarism in other courses will result in recommendations of expulsion.”<sup>2</sup> If you have any questions about what plagiarism is please come talk to me.

### Course Outline

<b>January</b>		
<b>9</b> Introductions  <i>Excerpts from Columbus, Polo, and Ibn Battuta</i>	<b>11</b> Social Science and Primary Sources	<b>13</b> Paper Writing and Plagiarism  <b>The Writing Quiz</b>
<b>16</b>  <b>No Class</b>  <i>Civilization: Introduction</i>	<b>18</b> What Conquering Looks Like	<b>20</b> Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 1</b>
<b>23</b> Natural Resources  <i>Civilization: Ch. 1</i>	<b>25</b> The Mali	<b>27</b> Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 2</b>
<b>30</b> Geography  <i>Civilization: Ch. 2</i>		

<sup>2</sup> Kristen Dawson, “USU 1320 Geography and Civilization,” (syllabus, Utah State University, 2012), 3.

February		
	1 The Safavid and the Inca  <b>First Paper DUE</b>	3 Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 3</b>
6 Political Structure  <i>Civilization: Ch. 3</i>	8 The Ethiopians and the Iroquois	10 Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 4</b>
13 Leadership & Military  <i>Civilization: Ch. 4</i>	15 The Aztec	17 Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 5</b>
21 (Tuesday) Economy  <i>Civilization: Ch. 5</i>	22 The Ming Dynasty & The Russians	24 Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 6</b>
27 Culture  <i>Civilization: Ch. 5</i>		
March		
	1 The Spanish  <b>Second Paper DUE</b>	3 Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 7</b>
6  No Class - Spring Break	8  No Class - Spring Break	10  No Class - Spring Break
13 Demography  <i>Why Nations Fail: Ch. 1 (Canvas)</i>	15 The Ottomans	17 Reading Discussion  <b>Quiz # 8</b>

20 Technology <i>Kaplan: Ch. 8 (Canvas)</i>	22 The Mongols	24 Reading Discussion <b>Quiz # 9</b>
27 Geopolitics <i>Collapse: Ch. 14</i>	29 Failing Civilizations	31 Reading Discussion <b>Quiz # 10</b>
<b>April</b>		
3 Globalization <i>Civilization: Conclusion</i>	5 Globalization <b>Third Paper DUE</b>	7 Reading Discussion <b>Quiz # 11</b>
10 United States as Conqueror <i>Kaplan: Ch. 15 (Canvas)</i>	12 United States as Conqueror	14 Reading Discussion <b>Quiz # 12</b>
17 Presentations	19 Presentations	21 Presentations
24 Presentations	26 Presentations	28 Presentations

Plain Text = Discussion/Lecture Material

*Italicized Text = Reading Assignment*

**Bolded Text = Quizzes**

**Red Text = Paper DUE Dates**

\*I reserve all rights to change the course schedule.