

# The Challenge of the West



Peoples and Cultures from 1787 to the Global Age

Lynn Hunt • Thomas R. Martin

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Volume C

# *The Challenge of the West*

PEOPLES AND CULTURES  
FROM 1787 TO THE GLOBAL AGE

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## PREFACE

Many American universities introduced Western civilization courses after World War I. Their intent was to explain what the United States had in common with its western European allies, that is, to justify American involvement in a European war. The emphasis on defending a shared tradition of Western values gained in urgency during World War II, but since the 1960s, and especially since the end of the Cold War, the wisdom of this approach has come into question. Even if everyone agreed on the purposes of teaching and learning about Western civilization, however, no one person or even team of authors could possibly master every field of scholarship and every national history that rightly enters into such an account. It is all the more important, therefore, to explain how we authors approached our task and what we hoped to accomplish.

The title of this book, *The Challenge of the West*, tells much about its general orientation. We focus on the contributions of a multitude of peoples and cultures to the making of Western values and traditions. But it is important to keep in mind that in the overall perspective of recorded human time, the very idea of the West is of recent vintage. It emerged as an idea in the fifteenth century, when the West began to dominate other areas of the globe through trade and colonization. The modern idea of the West as a trans-Atlantic entity—Europe and its colonial offshoots in North America—sharing common values and modes of social and political organization acquired distinctive meaning only at the end of the nineteenth century, when the United States joined the western European powers as a major industrial and colonizing force. Our task as authors has been to recount and analyze the evolution of these values and forms of organization, from the ancient ideas of community and individual responsibility to the modern forces of science and industry. We have consistently tried to place the West's emergence in a larger, world context, recognizing that it was not inevitable or predetermined but rather an unexpected, even surprising development.

As it secured technological and economic advantages, the West inevitably *challenged* other cul-

tures, even dominated many of them for a time and destroyed some altogether. But in the late twentieth century, the West in turn faces challenges from other cultures and distinctively different modes of social and political organization in the rest of the world. To understand the West's ascent to dominance and the present-day challenges to that hegemony, it is imperative to set the history of the West's own internal unfolding into the context of its relations with the other cultures of the world. We consequently return again and again to the theme of Western relationships—economic, military, and cultural—with the wider world.

Peoples and cultures appear in the plural in our title because we want to emphasize the variety of groups, ethnicities, cultures, and nations that have played important roles in making the West. Cultures are whole ways of life, not always neatly confined within the state boundaries or standard chronologies of traditional history. Historians now pay increasing attention to the continuities and long-term trends in ordinary people's lives in the past. The age at which young people marry, the number of children they have, the houses they live in, the clothes they wear, and the ways they read and entertain themselves have all provided significant clues to the attitudes, values, and actions that shaped the West. They cannot replace the history of wars, changes of rulers, and shifts in political alignments, but they help to put those political events into a broader, more meaningful context.

The original, early-twentieth-century conception of Western civilization was much more narrow. Historians defined Anglo-American political institutions—representative, constitutional government and a free-market society—at the core of Western values. The Western civilization course effectively offered training in the history of diplomacy, warfare, and past politics for the next generation of leaders of the "free world." In 1919 one such course was described as creating "a citizen who shall be safe for democracy."

This view has a relatively long lineage, going back to eighteenth-century European writers who took for their model English religious tolerance (in

fact limited to Protestants), freedom of the press, and constitutional monarchy (even when only a small proportion of adult men had the vote). The English agricultural expert and essayist Arthur Young, for example, offered a map of liberty in 1772:

Asia is by the best accounts despotic throughout. . . . Africa comes next, and what misery involves that vast country! . . . In Europe itself, what disproportion between liberty and slavery! Russia, Poland, the chief of Germany, Hungary, Turkey, the greatest part of Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Denmark and Norway. The following [free countries] bear no proportion to them, viz the British Isles, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, and the Germanic and Italian states. And in America, Spain, Portugal and France, have planted despotism; only Britain liberty.

There is much in this picture that we would agree with still today. The English did indeed pioneer our modern Western conceptions of religious tolerance, freedom of the press, and constitutional government. Our sense of the geography of freedom, however, is both broader and more nuanced.

Historians today devote much more of their attention to the countries that did not follow the English model but developed their own distinctive routes, and to the groups—slaves, indigenous peoples, workers, women, immigrants—who labored in supposedly free societies without enjoying the guarantees of liberty until very recently. By pushing further and further back into the past, to the once derided “Dark Ages” of medieval times, to Greek and Roman precedents, back even to the very earliest settlements known in prehistoric times, historians of the West have revealed all the surprising turns, the routes not taken, and the alternatives once available and then lost as humans collectively made the decisions that have led us to where we are today. We go back in time so far not just to trace the emergence of the entity later known as the West but also to learn and to satisfy our curiosity about how peoples and cultures in the past organized themselves and experienced their worlds.

As democracy has expanded in meaning to include different religious groups, women as well as men, workers as well as employers, immigrants as

well as natives, and peoples of all races and ethnicities, so, too, the history of what counts in the West has grown more capacious. We have tried to incorporate the history of once subordinate groups into our general narrative, showing how the struggles of daily life and ordinary people also helped to shape the Western past. We see these aspects not as colorful anecdotes or entertaining sideshows but rather as significant determinants of social and political relations. *Peoples* means *all* the people.

As Cold War barriers have broken down and the boundaries of the European Economic Community have expanded, the idea of Europe itself has changed. As a consequence, we make every effort to include Russia and eastern Europe in our story. It is hard to avoid the temptation of seeing eastern Europeans as “backward,” “unfree,” and certainly not Western like the rest of us, much as Arthur Young viewed them in the 1700s. But just as the West has begun to incorporate all its own peoples, so, too, it must confront its other geographical half—eastern Europe and Russia. Understanding the history of eastern Europe and its relationship to the West is one small step toward a meeting of cultures, perhaps even toward true integration that will render Young’s version truly obsolete.

We have tried to present our account in a straightforward chronological manner. Each chapter covers all of the events, people, and themes of a particular slice of time; thus the reader will not be forced to learn about political events in one chapter and then backtrack to the social and cultural developments of the period in the next. We have followed this pattern from the very beginning, where we discuss the roots of Western civilization in prehistory and in the ancient Near East, to the very end, where we ponder the transforming effect of globalization on the idea of the West.

We believe that it is important, above all else, to see the interconnections—between politics and cultures; between wars and diplomacy, on the one hand, and everyday life, on the other; between so-called mainstream history and the newer varieties of social, cultural, and women’s history. For this reason, we did not separate intellectual and cultural life or women’s and social history into distinct chapters or sections. We have tried to integrate them chronologically throughout.

History will always be an interim report; every generation rewrites history as interests change and

as new sources are discovered or known ones are reinterpreted. We have tried to convey the sense of excitement generated by new insights and the sense of controversy created by the clash of conflicting interpretations. For history is not just an inert thing, lying there in moldering records to be memorized by the next generation of hapless students. It is constantly alive, subject to pressure, and able to surprise us. If we have succeeded in conveying some of that vibrancy of the past, we will not be satisfied with what we have done—history does not sit still that long—but we will be encouraged to start rethinking and revising once again.

### Special Pedagogical Features

A range of useful study aids has been built into *The Challenge of the West*. Each chapter begins with a vivid anecdote that draws readers into the atmosphere and issues of the times and raises the chapter's major themes; the chapters conclude with brief summaries that tie together the thematic strands and point the readers onward. At the beginning of each chapter readers will find a list of important dates that introduces some of the key actors, events, and trends of the period. Timelines interspersed throughout the text give students a chronological overview of particular themes and processes. At the end of each chapter are carefully chosen bibliographies, first, of source materials ranging from political documents to novels, and second, of up-to-date interpretive studies that will aid those wishing to seek in-depth treatment of particular topics.

The text's full-color design features nearly 400 illustrations, including examples from material culture, the history of architecture, iconography, painting, cartoons, posters, and photography. The images come not only from Europe and the United States but also from Russia, Africa, and Asia. The illustrations combine well-known classics that are important for cultural literacy with fresh images that document, in particular, the lives of ordinary people and women. The text also contains more than 200 maps and graphs. Each chapter includes large maps that show major developments—wars, patterns of trade, political realignments, and so on—as well as smaller “spot” maps that immediately aid the student's geographical understanding

of subjects ranging from the structure of Old Kingdom Egypt to the civil war in Yugoslavia.

### Supplementary Program for *The Challenge of the West*

An extensive ancillary program accompanies *The Challenge of the West*. It is designed not only to assist instructors but to develop students' critical-thinking skills and to bolster their understanding of key topics and themes treated in the textbook. In the supplements as in the textbook, our goal has been to make teaching and learning enjoyable and challenging.

Students will find a valuable tool in *Studying Western Civilization: A Student's Guide to Reading Maps, Interpreting Documents, and Preparing for Exams*, by Richard M. Long of Hillsborough Community College. The guide includes helpful aids such as chapter outlines and summaries, vocabulary exercises, and a variety of self-tests on the chapter content. It also features primary-source excerpts (selected by the text authors) with interpretive questions, as well as map exercises to build geographical understanding of historical change. A two-volume set of documents provides students and instructors alike with hundreds of primary references, ranging from the classics of Western political, legal, and intellectual history to the freshest sources on social, cultural, and women's history.

The *Instructor's Guide*, prepared by Sara W. Tucker of Washburn University, includes annotated chapter outlines, lecture suggestions, and a wealth of teaching resources. The annotated chapter outlines are available on disk as the *Instructor's Toolkit*. D. C. Heath is also making available to adopters a Western civilization videodisc with 2,100 images that is barcoded, captioned, and indexed for classroom use.

Rounding out the supplementary resources are the *Computerized Testing Program*, which allows instructors to create customized problem sets for quizzes and examinations, and the accompanying printed *Test Item File*. More than 4,000 questions, prepared by Denis Paz of Clemson University and Jachin Warner Thacker of Western Kentucky University, are available in this testing program. Finally, we have produced a transparency set with some 100 full-color maps.

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