

MODERNIZATION IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING TOOL

by

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We are living and teaching today in a time when the trend is to develop courses of an interdisciplinary nature that offer a global perspective. This call is a cause for great excitement but is at the same time fraught with difficulties and even dangers. Despite possible problems, however, the challenge of designing and teaching this sort of course is worth the effort. At least, this is my experience after developing a course on "Modernization in Global Perspective."

To understand the purpose and desired impact of this course, it would be useful first to describe what is meant by "modernization." In the 1960s, the term "modernization" was understood commonly as "development." According to this understanding, social scientists, both in academe and in government, spoke of development or modernization in a positivistic way, i.e., as a process that implied "take-off" and "progress."¹ Often the term implied associations with the aims of American foreign policy and with the capitalist versus communist controversy. Such views of modernization are at best simplistic and at worst demagogic. For those of us who developed this course, "modernization" did not imply "progress" or involve showcase examples that prove the superiority of the Free World to Iron Curtain countries. I should quickly add that in saying this we do not necessarily wish to imply failure or ideological poverty for the West either.²

By "modernization," we refer to those features that are descriptive of societies undergoing rapid change and transformation. This rapid transformation is characteristic of the modern world, whether in North America, Europe, South America, Africa, or Asia. Societies on each of these continents are at various points of the modernization process, some barely out of the hunting-and-gathering or agricultural stages of societal organization, and some, such as Japan and, slightly behind it, the United States and West Germany, already in a stage of advanced modernization.³

In brief, the main causes of modernization are modern knowledge and industrialization. Becoming modern involves a host of individual psychological and attitudinal changes as well as changes of societal organization and priorities. These changes have been sparked, historically, in certain western societies by the increase in knowledge and access to new ideas that commenced during the twelfth-century Renaissance and, more so, by the vast increments of knowledge during the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the period from Galileo to Newton. The technological revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have democratized this intellectual revolution that began with the Renaissance, and have, through the frame of mind engendered by the growth of factories and factory experience, spawned, to greater and lesser degrees, individuals who conform to the modern personality.⁴

Although there are several ways that modernization can be defined, perhaps the least controversial and most non-descriptive measure of modernization is the degree to which inanimate power has replaced animate power. Or, conversely, a society's degree of modernization can be gauged by the degree to which that society might be disrupted if decreases in inanimate power occurred. The more a society becomes modernized, the more

small decreases of inanimate power cannot be compensated for by large increases in animate power.⁵

Although we who teach the modernization course prefer a more descriptive definition of the modernization process, I use the dichotomy I/A because its parsimony serves to illustrate my point: modernization is an inexorable process that all societies now undergo. Yet it is neither inherently good nor bad. The modernization theorist and teacher need not, perhaps should not, be either a St.-Simonian apostle of industry and utility or a Luddite intent upon subverting the gears of modern society. Perhaps our chief goal in the teaching of this course is to enable students to recognize the process in which we are all caught up and to help them cope with the process both as individuals and as members of a society that is now national but that everyday becomes more global.

As we see it, the patterns of modernization are marked by three characteristics: (1) they are, in terms of human history, extremely recent; (2) they are unprecedentedly subversive of the past (even though they substitute new traditions for old ones); and (3) they are unbelievably bizarre.⁶

These three points are difficult for students to understand. Today's students are generally uninformed about world history and civilization. One of the consequences of this knowledge gap is that they find it difficult to understand or realize that societal organization, priorities, and attitudes have differed markedly from those with which they are familiar. To overcome this historical/cultural blinder we show films of the Yanomamo people of Venezuela and Brazil.⁷ Rudely contemporary with us, they seem separated by millennia from us. Two of these films spotlight Catholic and Protestant missionaries whose goals are (a) to convert these people to more universalistic religions (themselves marks of the modernization process)⁸ and (b) to prepare them for "civilization" and modernity. (I should add parenthetically that these missionaries are encouraged by the Venezuelan government that looks forward to the day when the Yanomamo will lose their insular self-identity and come to see themselves as members of the larger nation-state, another mark of modernization.) These films show how rapidly modernization occurs: in fourteen years these tribes have moved centuries in the ways they trade, hunt, fish, eat, and believe. What can one expect, given this velocity of change, when the current missionary-educated children mature and when their children matriculate into (probably) state-owned schools?

The first lesson of this course is the recentness of modernization patterns. If we date the geometric increase of the velocity of change from the Industrial Revolution, these patterns first began to exhibit themselves in certain western countries around 1800, making the onset of modernization contemporary with industrialization. Yet, these two developments are not yoked together. By 1960, the modernizing and modernized world had entered what some call the "post-industrial age" or the "information society."⁹ These types of structural economic and employment revolutions have occurred in rapid succession and are, in that respect, entirely different from the previous long stages of history in which hunting-and-gathering societies persisted for at least 150 millennia, followed by several millennia of agricultural societies.

Once students recognize the revolutionary nature of this new world of which they are a part, we try to demonstrate how these changes and patterns alter the status quo that had prevailed before the onset of the

modernization process. While the subversions are both subtle and gross, we prefer to suggest their nature by empirical investigations of various societies at various stages in that process. It is only by this inductive approach, we believe, that students can acquire a hands-on experience of the ways in which former traditions are jettisoned or transformed.

Finally, we try in a general way to alert students to the bizarreness of the modernization process. So strange is the modern world that our ancestors of even two centuries past--let alone the Yanomamo suddenly brought into Caracas--might not recognize the world they had entered. Things we find commonplace they would surely find astonishing: communities of over 250 people; a society with a low-birth, low-death rate; roads on which people rush toward and past each other at 55 miles per hour; mass political organization and mass spectator sports; and high levels of centralization. In addition, today we live in the anonymity of crowded cities and suburbs, oftentimes hundreds or thousands of miles from our kin. These features of modern society are at total variance with the general lot of humankind. Prior to modernization, over 90% spent perhaps 90% of their time within eye- and ear-shot of their own families and kin.

We try to demonstrate class how modernization can be arduous and agonizing, societally and individually. One of the most important points in this respect is that, while the "first-comers"--England, France, and the United States--stumbled through the industrial stage of the process over two or three centuries, "late-comers" would seem to enjoy the advantage of having models (capitalist, socialist, communist). Yet this seeming advantage may be illusory, for the changes that first-comers took 200 years to consummate often have to be experienced in twenty or fifty years by the late-comers. While they are running to catch up, the first-comers continue in the modernization process, leaving the late-comers perennially behind, with all the attendant inequalities continually reinforced.

This lesson--that modernization is not necessarily successful--is also a difficult one for our students. As they have for twenty years or more imbibed the Horatio Alger types of myths that propel our society, they find it difficult to conceive that material progress can leave late-comer society as badly or worse off than before it came into contact with the modern world. Without making moral judgments, we try to show that the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Moral Majority/Neo-Conservative movements in the United States are just two types of fundamentalist reaction that discomfiture with the modernization process can cause.

"Modernization in Global Perspective" surveys selected examples of modernizing societies throughout the world, at various stages in the process--from those just beginning to be modernized (e.g., the Yanomamo) to those in a state of advanced modernization (e.g., Japan). As we introduce readings about them, we attempt to focus our discussion in terms of five aspects: intellectual, political, economic, social, and psychological.¹⁰ These features best allow analysis and summary statements. Admittedly arbitrary categories, they are useful because of their inherent comparability and interrelatedness.

This mutual interrelatedness of the analytical categories allows for distinct analysis, but all the while insuring that the course stays in focus--no matter which country or society we are discussing at any given moment. It should also be clear from the organizing taxonomy we employ that several disciplinary perspectives and insights were necessary in the development and continue to be necessary in the offering of this course.

Upon returning from a year at the National Humanities Institute at the University of Chicago in 1978, and intent upon organizing an interdisciplinary course structured on the theme of modernization, I began holding meetings with interested faculty in the Social Sciences and Humanities. We met on a bi-weekly basis for two years (1978-80) trying to define what each of our fields--history, political science, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and literature--mean by the term "modernization"; what dates are appropriate for this discourse; and what literature in each of these fields pertains to this topic. We read, discussed, reread, argued, and, slowly, began to define as a group our mutual interests and terms. We came to realize that each individual disciplinary insight and analytical method, while all important in understanding our topic, had to be incorporated within each of us, inasmuch as it was possible. While the initial offering of the course was to be in a team-taught format (two faculty per section), our goal was for each of us thereafter to teach our sections individually. We took to heart a passage from Immanuel Wallerstein that we had read at one point in our planning sessions:

This work . . . involves not only the study of groups, but of social systems. When one studies a social system, the classical lines of division within social science are meaningless. Anthropology, economics, political science, sociology--and history--are divisions of the discipline anchored in a certain liberal conception of the state and its relation to functional and geographical sectors of the social order. They make a certain limited sense if the focus of one's study is organizations. They make none at all if the focus is the social system. I am not calling for a multidisciplinary approach to the study of social systems, but for a unidisciplinary approach.¹¹

Our conviction was that the social sciences (and the humanities) have become increasingly interrelated, and that students (and faculty) in any one of these disciplines could best be exposed to the relationships among them through the study of a single complex theme. The theme of modernization, we feel, is sufficiently complex, yet can be introduced without excessive technical preparation by the students.

The course is thus well-suited as a capstone to undergraduate training in the social sciences, and it was intended as such. However, I must add that the core faculty also hoped the course could, through its deep structural analysis, serve as a method of social criticism, in the best French or German tradition.¹²

We originally began our course with readings and discussions about modernization theory. We found during the first two years that such ideational approaches, introduced at the beginning of the semester, do not mean much to most of our students. Therefore, we have changed the order of topics in the course and now begin it more inductively, allowing us more slowly to prepare our students for the theoretical rigors of C. E. Black, Marion J. Levy, Jr., Alex Inkeles, and Gino Germani.

This inductive approach is achieved in two ways. First, we are now beginning the semester with the anthropological films on the Yanomamo Indians of Venezuela. These films show: (1) the medical and scholarly intrusion of modern scientists in a tribe as yet untouched by the modern world; using these films as a kind of control, we can then proceed to the other films which show (2) Yanomamo tribes some years after their continuing interaction with missionaries and other modernizing agents. The changes are

quite startling. Except for some few students who for religious reasons have refused to believe that "we" (Europeans, Americans) were ever like the Yanomamo, the lesson is brought home to the students rather dramatically.

Secondly, we next have the students select one or two of several novels dealing with the impact of modernizing agents on a traditional society.¹³ While these novels do not examine problems of the modernization process in a systematic or scientific way, they do resonate with insights into the process that only the humanistic disciplines can provide. Again, the results dramatically generate intense student reaction and discussion. This, we feel, is all to the good, because the on-going modernization process has to be known both ideationally and emotionally.

From this point, we are able to analyze more discerningly the modernization process in the Western and then in the non-Western world.¹⁴ We do this through other studies of a sociological and historical bent,¹⁴ and through a series of recommended readings that we have put together. These readings deal, in comparative ways, with aspects of the modernization process in the Western and Third Worlds. Given the fact, however, that the course is only of one semester's duration, we must be selective in the Third World societies that we investigate, and rely upon student choice to select other societies for individual study projects.

What are the net results of this course? As with any social science/humanities course, we hope to overcome student parochialism both culturally and historically. Pedagogically, especially in a course that is now one of several (and which served as a model of development for them) offered as capstone experiences on our campus, "Modernization in Global Perspective" is useful as a way of organizing disparate social science and humanities methodologies and perspectives and showing how they, taken together, can offer significant insights into the human condition. (I believe, also, that the modernization theme will be a useful organizing structure for a lower-division world history course that colleagues are now developing.) But, most important, we hope that this course will help students understand and explain their personal and societal experiences as well as to judge better where we are and why. The course, at bottom, has a kind of civic purpose: not to justify what is, but to form minds that can make better decisions and choices about what is becoming for our national and global society.

NOTES

¹A typical work in this genre is Walt W. Rostow, Stages of Economic Growth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

²The colleagues who have worked with me in developing "Modernization in Global Perspective" are Molly Debysingh (Geography), Albert Gunns (History), Dorothy Libby (Anthropology), Charles Pomeroy (English). In planning the course, we were influenced by "the Princeton school," including C. E. Black, Marius Jansen, Marion J. Levy, Jr., and Gilbert Rozman. We were aided by a National Endowment for the Humanities demonstration grant.

³Cf. Cyril E. Black, The Dynamics of Modernization (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), esp. 90-94.

⁴For an introduction to these ideas, see Ibid., 7-13; Gino Germani, "Industrialization and Modernization," Encyclopaedia Britannica, IX (Chicago: H.H. Benton, 1974), 520-527; Alex Inkeles, Becoming Modern (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), esp. 15-35, 154-174, 319-347.

⁵Cf. Marion J. Levy, Jr., Modernization and the Structure of Societies: A Setting for International Affairs (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 9-15; and Marion J. Levy, Jr., Modernization: Latecomers and Survivors (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 3, n. 1.

⁶Ibid., passim.

⁷Napoleon Chagnon, "Ocamo is My Town," and "New Tribes Mission" (films) (State College, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1971).

⁸Germani, 521.

⁹Cf. Daniel Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society (New York, 1973); and Mark Porat, "The Information Society" (film) (New York: The Aspen Institute and KCET, Los Angeles, 1979).

¹⁰Cf. Black, 13-26.

¹¹Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System, I (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 11 (my emphasis).

¹²I am thinking here of the Frankfurterschule and such French structuralists or semi-structuralists as Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Giles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Felix Guattari.

¹³For a list of these novels, see Appendix, "Required Books."

¹⁴For these, see Appendix, "Required Books" and "Required Articles."

APPENDIX

Modernization in Global Perspective

REQUIRED BOOKS

Hane, Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan (Pantheon)

Kemp, Industrialization in the Nonwestern World (Longman)

Stearns, The Other Side of Western Civilization (3rd ed.), vol. 2 (Harcourt)

Vogel, Japan as Number 1 (Harper)

Two from among the following four novels (do not buy until assigned):

Achebe, Things Fall Apart (Heinade)

Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve (Signet)

Momaday, House Made of Dawn (Perennial)

Pa Chin, Family (Anchor)

REQUIRED ARTICLES

A collection of articles dealing with modernization has been prepared by instructors in the class.

- Volkman, "The Yanomamo: Background"
 Chagnon, "Doing Fieldwork Among the Yanomamo"
 Inkeles, "Toward a Definition of Modern Man"
 Germani, "Industrialization and Modernization"
 Black, Ch. 1 from The Dynamics of Modernization
 Ariès, "The Family and the City"
 Gans, "Levittown and America," from The Levittowners
 Jansen and Stone, "Education and Modernization in Japan and England"
 Dore, "The Late Development Effect"
 Byars, "Culture, Politics, and the Urban Factory Worker in Brazil: The Case of Zè Maria"
 Rohlen, "The Company Work Group," from Modern Japanese Organization and Decision-Making
 DeVos, "Apprenticeship and Paternalism," from Modern Japanese Organization and Decision-Making
 Janzen, Chs. 11 & 12 from The Quest for Therapy in Lower Zaire
 Levy, "Modernization as a Universal Social Solvent"
 Inkeles, "Two Case Studies"
 Wallerstein, "Dependence in an Interdependent World: The Limited Possibilities of Transformation within the Capitalist World Economy"
 MacDougall, "Three Articles on Stress and Leisure"
 Marshall, "India Climbs Down Ladder of Technology Leadership"

Topic Schedule

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Readings</u>
I. <u>Background</u>	
A. Introduction	
1. "Primitive" Societies: The Yanomamo, a Case Study	Volkman, "The Yanomamo"* Chagnon, "Doing Fieldwork Among the Yanomamo"* Films: - Multidisciplinary Ocamo is My Town New Tribes Mission Ax Fight Novels (2/student): <u>Things Fall Apart</u> <u>Nectar in a Sieve</u> <u>House Made of Dawn</u> <u>Family</u>
B. The Nature of Modernization	
1. Secularization	Inkeles, "Toward a Definition of Modern Man"*
2. Theories and Terms of Modernization	Germani, "Industrialization and Modernization"* Black, Ch. 1, <u>Dynamics</u> *
C. Nonmodern Societies: A Further Consideration	
1. Traditional	Stearns, Part I (See Schedule A)
2. Primitive	
3. Leap from Traditional/Primitive to Modern	Ariès, "The Family and the City"*

- D. Modern Societies (West)
1. Technology Stearns, Pts. 2 & 3 (See Schedule B)
 2. The Economic System
 3. The Political System: managerial society, bureaucratized and professionalized Gans, "Levittown and America"*
Film: The Information Society
- II. Global Modernization
- A. Patterns of Transition to Modernity
1. Religion Jansen and Stone, "Education and Modernization in Japan and England"*
 2. Education and Professionalization Dore, "The Late Development Effect"*
 3. Factory Byars, "Urban Factory Worker in Brazil"*
 4. Self-Choice Rohlen, "Co. Work Group"*
 5. Westernization? DeVos, "Apprenticeship and Paternalism"*
- Hane, Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts
Vogel, Japan as Number 1
Janzen, Chs. 11 & 12, Quest for Therapy in Zaire*
- B. Modern Civilization: Problems and Prospects
1. First-Comers Levy, "Modernization as a Universal Social Solvent"*
Inkeles, "Two Case Studies"*
Wallerstein, "Dependence in an Interdependent World"*
Kemp, Industrialization in the Nonwestern World
MacDougall, "Three Articles on Stress and Leisure"*
 2. Late-Comers Marshall, "India Climbs Down Ladder of Technology Leadership"*

*Readings marked with an asterisk are in the collection of recommended readings we have compiled.

Schedule A

Readings from Stearns, The Other Side of Western Civilization (3rd ed.), vol. 2, Part 1:

- Stearns, Introduction to Part 1 (Stearns, 16-20)
Wrightson & Levine, "The Peasantry: Material Life and Rational Controls" (Stearns, 21-28)
Davis, "Popular Religion in Preindustrial Society" (Stearns, 29-35)
Bever, "Witchcraft and Social Tensions in Europe" (Stearns, 36-43)
Thomas, "Religion and the Decline of Magic" (Stearns, 44-55)
Laslett, "The World We Have Lost" (Stearns, 56-68)
Hunt, "Premodern Families" (Stearns, 69-84)

Schedule B

Readings from Stearns, The Other Side of Western Civilization (3rd ed.), vol. 2, Parts 2 and 3:

- Stearns, Introduction to Part 2 (Stearns, 97-101)
- Shammas, "A New Definition of Home Sweet Home" (Stearns, 102-109)
- Flandrin, "The Rise of Romantic Love" (Stearns, 110-118)
- Shorter, et al., "A Sexual Revolution" (Stearns, 119-127)
- Plumb, "The New World of Children," (Stearns, 128-134)
- Goubert, "The Rise of Modern Medicine" (Stearns, 135-144)
- Scull, "The Insane in Modern Society" (Stearns, 145-154)
- Zeldin, "The Middle Class in France" (Stearns, 155-162)
- Tilly, Tilly, & Tilly, "The Changing Nature of Protest" (Stearns, 163-173)
- Stearns, Introduction to Part 3 (Stearns, 176-179)
- Branca, "Middle Class Women" (Stearns, 180-193)
- McHale & Johnson, "Crime and Modern Society" (Stearns, 194-202)
- Baker, "New Leisure: Sports" (Stearns, 203-214)
- Bailey, "Modern Leisure, Middle Class Style" (Stearns, 215-225)
- Weber, "Popular Education: Peasants into Frenchmen" (Stearns, 226-245)
- Price & Berlanstein, "Workers in Modern Society: Two Cases" (Stearns, 246-265)

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EVALUATION

Student grades will be based upon a combination of grades earned in class discussion, panels, and written work. As this is designed to be a discussion class, heavy emphasis will be placed upon class participation, both in terms of quantity and quality. Discussion will account for approximately 30% of the final grade, panels about 15%, with the remaining 55% divided among written items. No formal exams are planned.

PANELS

Students will be chosen to serve on panels whose responsibilities will be to spearhead class discussion.

LOGS AND JOURNALS

Each student will be required to keep a log (notes) of the audio-visual material presented in class. Also required will be a student journal in which you record your reflections upon the materials and ideas pertaining to modernization encountered during the semester.

PAPERS

Two or three formal papers will be required during the semester. Details pertaining to each will be given in class when assignments are made.