

Undergraduate Course Prospectus

Course Title: The Decline of the “Modern West” and the Rise of Asia

Course Code:

Instructor: Prof (Dr) Suraj Kumar

Schedule: Day/ Time/ Semester

Course Description

This course examines the historical, cultural, and geopolitical shifts underpinning the perceived decline of Western hegemony and the concurrent ascendancy of Asia. Through a reading and discussion of work by Oswald Spengler, William McNeill, Paul Kennedy, Francis Fukuyama, Kishore Mahbubani and others, students will explore rise and fall of hegemonic empires (Great Powers), post-WWII economic transformations, and contemporary dynamics of the world today (including polycrisis, Donald Trump and the rhetoric of chaos) and the increased significance of Asia (mainly China and India).

The course interrogates narratives of civilizational decline and rise, emphasizing global interdependencies and critiques of Eurocentrism and post-colonialism.

Course Objectives

1. Analyze theories of civilizational decline (e.g., Spengler) and critiques of Western hegemony.
2. Assess the impact of colonialism (including “informal empire”, education policies (e.g., Macaulay’s Minute), and post-colonial development in Asia. (ref. “Empire of Chaos”)
3. Compare economic trajectories (Japan, China, India) and cultural soft power (K-pop, Bollywood, etc.).
4. Evaluate geopolitical tensions (e.g., US-China relations), decline of hyper-globalisation and future global scenarios (ref. Varoufakis on Techno-feudalism, Laderman & Simms on the Making of Donald Trump’s World View).

Weekly Topics

1. Introduction: Conceptualizing “West” and “Asia”
2. Theories of Decline: Spengler’s Decline of the West, Toynbee, Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations
3. Colonialism & Knowledge: Macaulay’s Minute, Edward Said’s Orientalism
4. Post-1945 Shifts: Decolonization, Cold War, Bretton Woods
5. Asian Economic Miracles: Japan, South Korea, Singapore
6. China’s Rise: from Mao to Market Reforms, Belt and Road Initiative

7. India's Trajectory: Post-1947 Development, Towards Viksit Bharat
8. Soft Power: Media, Technology, and Cultural Export
9. Demographics & Innovation: Youth Dividend, Tech Hubs
10. Geopolitics: US-China Rivalry, Regional Conflicts, NATO - "The Eagle has (Crash)Landed"
11. Critiquing Narratives: Beyond "Decline vs. Rise" Binaries
12. Beyond multilateralism: the future of the UN and donor agencies
13. What about SDGs?: Prospects beyond 2030
14. Synthesis: Scenarios for a Multipolar World

Assessment

- Participation (10%): Engagement in discussions and debates.
- In-class Quiz (30%)
- Midterm Essay/ Research Paper (20%): Case study (e.g., China's Belt and Road Initiative, India's Digital Stack, De-Growth, Fully Automated Luxury Capitalism, Green New Deal, Trump and Tariffs)
- Final Exam (30%)

Required Texts

1. Spengler, Oswald, *The Decline of the West* (Abridged Edition, OUP).
2. McNeill, William, *The Rise of the West* (University of Chicago Press, 1975)
3. Macaulay, Thomas, *Minute on Indian Education* (1835). [Primary Source]
4. Mahbubani, Kishore, *The New Asian Hemisphere* (Public Affairs, 2008).
5. Huntington, Samuel, *The Clash of Civilizations* (Simon & Schuster, 1996).
6. Said, Edward, *Orientalism* (Penguin, 1978).
7. Fukuyama, Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992)
8. Charlie Laderman & Brendan Simms, *Donald Trump: the Making of a World View* (I.B. Tauris & Co, 2017)

Bibliography*

*Primary Sources:

- Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West* (1918–1922).
- Macaulay, Thomas. *Minute on Indian Education* (1835)

Secondary Sources:*

- Arrighi, Giovanni, *Adam Smith in Beijing* (Verso, 2007).

- Frank, Andre Gunder, *Re-Orient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (UC Press, 1998).
- Mishra, Pankaj, *From the Ruins of Empire* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).
- Sen, Amartya, *The Argumentative Indian* (Penguin, 2005).
- Zakaria, Fareed, *The Post-American World* (W.W. Norton, 2008).

Additional Readings:

- Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and Capitalism* (1980s).
- Mishra, Pankaj, *Age of Anger* (2017).
- Mahbubani, Kishore, *Has the West Lost It?* (2018).

Additional Resources

- Documentaries: *The Coming War on China* (John Pilger), *Asian Corridor in Heaven* (KBS).
- Films: *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018).

This course challenges deterministic narratives, encouraging critical reflection on global interconnectedness. Students will be encouraged to engage with diverse perspectives to understand the complexities of 21st-century power shifts, including the Rise of Trump and MAGA and its Global Implications.