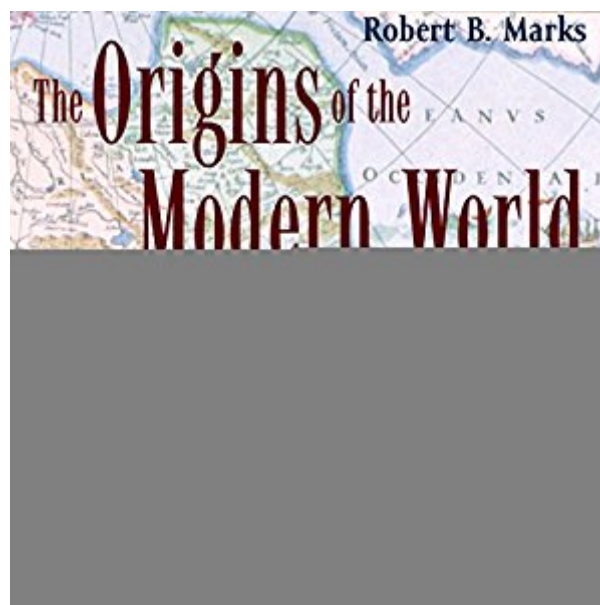




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# **The Origins Of The Modern World: A Global And Ecological Narrative From The Fifteenth To The Twenty-first Century, 2nd Edition (World Social Change)**



## Synopsis

This clearly written and engrossing book presents a global narrative of the origins of the modern world from 1400 to the present. Unlike most studies, which assume that the "rise of the West" is the story of the coming of the modern world, this history, drawing upon new scholarship on Asia, Africa, and the New World, constructs a story in which those parts of the world play major roles. Robert B. Marks defines the modern world as one marked by industry, the nation state, interstate warfare, a large and growing gap between the wealthiest and poorest parts of the world, and an escape from "the biological old regime." He explains its origins by emphasizing contingencies (such as the conquest of the New World); the broad comparability of the most advanced regions in China, India, and Europe; the reasons why England was able to escape from common ecological constraints facing all of those regions by the 18th century; and a conjuncture of human and natural forces that solidified a gap between the industrialized and non-industrialized parts of the world. Now in a new edition that brings the saga of the modern world to the present, the book considers how and why the United States emerged as a world power in the twentieth century and became the sole superpower by the twenty-first century. Once again arguing that the rise of the United States to global hegemon was contingent, not inevitable, Marks also points to the resurgence of Asia and the vastly changed relationship of humans to the environment that may, in the long run, overshadow any political and economic milestones of the past hundred years.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Robert Marks' textbook narrates the flowing, interrelational nature of world history. From his

ecological narrative approach history happens from a global (rather than Eurocentric) and processual (rather than event driven) scale. He tells the story of East meeting West, hating it; pulling back; lone traders, barbarians and militaries reopening trade relations; skirmishes; wars and cultural and technological systems advancing (or not). In all of that--nature and people live life. Marks' generates his logic from a wide assortment of sociology, history and scientific sources. His ecological narrative is a synthesis of Andre Gunder Frank's and Kenneth Pomeranz' inclusion of China in global modernization. The global scale of the narrative counters the Eurocentrism that has propagandized most scholarly efforts in world history. Oddly I do not find a reference to Klaus Krippendorf's "Ecological Narratives" (Krippendorf, 2000). Krippendorf was my inspiration to investigate the potential for ecological narratives to tell of the enduring power of human agency to create global change rather than the classic historical methodological tunnel vision on political and military events. Your students will gain from this interrelational global history. The historical narrative provides a clear framework to place people and events in the great stream of human network expansion and integration. This book made history interesting to me. Since I read this book I have been on a historical biography and documentary film binge. Political Science courses will gain from the clarity of the integrated systems of trade development, technological advancement and political change. Although, Comparative Politics may need to consider a new scale. Comparative Politics could jettison the fragmented state centric research approach to focus on Comparative Global Networks that impact other global and regional systems and in turn shape national politics. A prime example would be the recent international economic restructuring that has since 2008 moved power away from the G8 state executives. The movement of global decisionmaking to the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the G20 happened only with technological advancement and financial networking. The unforeseen impacts of economic networking and restructuring created vulnerabilities at every level of political, distributive, and financial systems (derivatives, mortgages, employment, labor rights...). The personal tragedies brought on by the financial "black swans" are telling examples of the potential value of conceptualizing global history from the scale of the ecological narrative.

Cites Krippendorf, K. 2000. *Ecological Narratives: Reclaiming the voice of theorized others*. In Ciprut, J. (ed). 2000. *The Art of the Feud: Reconceptualizing International Relations*. Praeger Publishing. Connecticut. Pp 1-26

I've used this work as one book among many in a "Historical Geography" course that largely focuses on why Europe came to dominate the world after ca. 1500 Common Era. It's still something to marvel at--how did Europe go ahead and conquer / dominate / subordinate much of the known

world by about 1900 or 1920? Some of my students like it a lot. It's not my favorite book, but it's a quick readable polemic about the state of the world economy ca. 1450 and after. It summarizes some of the research of Andre Gunder Frank and also / especially Ken Pomeranz. I would describe the book as uneven--it's a bit "choppy," as if the unifying narrative is in part taken from the headings and subheadings that are used liberally to break up the text. Many students find it more readable than Guns, Germs, and Steel, which is a real beast because of Jared Diamond's desire to keep telling us one more thing that he knows. Offhand, I'll give it four stars out of five. Many of my students would give it four or five stars. At some points it could get 3 and a half--parts merit 5 stars. I find the author's approach to be rather polemical--but it's a pretty good style for what he's doing.

I loved reading Marks because it had a clear argument throughout the entire book. It gives you a nice overview of the world history, explaining how and what sort of events led to the industrialization of some nations and how did that affect others. Out of all my compulsory economic history books this was my favorite.

I bought this book for a world history class and learned a lot about why the world is what it is today. For example why China and India are so poor today when they were not always poor and why Eastern Europe is economically behind. A good read if you're into history or if you need it for a class.

This book is a good general narrative of modern world history. It looks at events from a global perspective, not a typical Western or Eurocentric point of view. I had this book for a grad class, and really enjoyed it. It does not bog down in too much detail, but gives you a good breathe of knowledge. It is a good quick read and is not too dense. If you want a book over glorifying the West, Europe or the US, this book is not for you.

Bought for Comparative Politics class. Good textbook if you're looking to learn objectively. Most textbooks are Euro-centric and are biased.

This book strikes a good balance between readability and comprehensiveness: it is thinner than most history textbooks, and more conceptual than detail-oriented. What I found most interesting was the approach of viewing major trends in history (colonization, trade networks, wars) through the lens of economics. Most history I have read has been more about what happened, and has attempted to explain causes in terms of personality, religion, or culture, but not succeeding very well. Viewing

history in terms of economics makes this book more about \*why\* things happened as they did. I loved that approach. Perhaps some historians (like the authors of the other books) would complain that such an approach is overly simplistic. I would disagree; economics seems to be, to history, what conservation of energy is to physics: a simple concept that shapes everything else.

A must read! If you are interested in the history and economic state of the world market!! I enjoyed reading it. It was required reading material for a world history class I took. FYI: history major :)

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