

**From:** The Modern World Global History since 1760 Course Team <noreply@coursera.org>  
**To:** jeepproject@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** Starting Week 4  
**Date:** Sun, 03 Feb 2013 23:53:29 +0000

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Dear jeffrey epstein,

The Week 4 material is now posted.

New students are still joining the course ... welcome! Take the material at your preferred pace. And all these weekly announcements remain on file for you to look at when you are ready.

For those of you who are wrapping up Week 3, a simple way of seeing the structure of the whole story is to notice how the stage is set around much of the world with a set of institutions and habits of thought. These grow out of the commercial, military, and political changes — mainly emanating from Europe — between the mid-1700s and the early 1800s. Important tipping points early in the 1800s shape the destiny of North America, South America, and India. The revolutionary wars originating in Europe matter a lot for that.

Let's zoom in on one example, a place I did not mention in my presentations. Consider the fate of the island of Java — the enormous and populous island now so central in the present-day state of Indonesia. Strange as it may seem, faraway Java was yet another important battleground in the revolutionary wars of Europe. There had been a loose, commercial 'ancien regime' in Java, linking the Dutch East India Company with overseas Chinese traders and with most power in the countryside still held by local Javanese rulers. After Holland was conquered by the French republic then empire (and ruled by one of Napoleon's brothers), distant Java was taken over and turned upside down by a Franco-Dutch revolutionary regime (1808-1811). Then a dictatorial British occupation (1811-1816) seized control. Then Dutch rule was restored at the Congress of Vienna, leading to the creation of a more modern colonial state — the Netherlands East Indies. The new Dutch colonial state was soon embroiled in an all-out struggle with Javanese princes. By 1830 this war left the Dutch in undisputed control over Java, eyeing fuller control of other islands and territories beyond. Many Javanese were divided by whether to prefer working with the Dutch rulers or with traditional rulers, like Diponegoro, who were saying that a renewed Islamic order was the key to restore traditional ways of life. And Diponegoro was also borrowing ideas and even clothing styles from far away, from Islamic models in the Ottoman Empire and in Arabia.

A key theme in Week 4 is the way the global connections of this earlier period, setting up positions and possibilities, become radically intensified during the middle of the 1800s by developments like the revolution in transport and communications. The result is an even more intense collision of global forces with local communities, with huge effects now reaching the most settled and powerful traditional societies of East Asia. The institutions and habits of thought set between 1760 and 1830 were now being energized by truly new capabilities — associated with the phrase 'industrial revolution' -- and then all the arguments that begin about how to make sense of these changes. A period ensues, between about 1830 and 1870, that really does transform the world. In Week 4 we'll pose some big "why" questions about that and then try to work through some of them.

One especially interesting thread to follow is: What happens to the institution of slavery? Slavery was an ancient institution, manifested in different ways around the world for millenia. Today the world finds it abnormal and abhorrent.

1. Why the age of abolition in the first half of the 1800s, beginning in Britain? Plainly something remarkable was happening in human thought, in ideas about the character of common humanity. Political ideas about liberty and the rights of man play powerfully into this. So do religious beliefs, especially among fervent Protestants discovering and rediscovering personal paths to salvation during a period of real religious ferment in the early 1800s in Europe and North America.

2. The role of science doesn't necessarily help the cause. In fact, the early science on natural history and biology became a powerful force to indoctrinate and reinforce racial classifications of many kinds, handing new arguments to the slaveholders. Charles Darwin doesn't agree with the way his theories of 'natural selection' were misused by some, but many forms of these arguments capture the imagination of thinkers around the world. Perhaps the most respected scientific figure in the USA in 1860 was Louis Agassiz (at Harvard), a man who believed deeply in the pseudoscience of white supremacy and racial segregation.

3. The intensification of global capitalism cut both ways. Already, in Africa, traditional communities had been profoundly disrupted by the way the slave trade had empowered new kinds of powerful warlords. Yet new sources for sugar undercut the value of slavery in plantation societies like the West Indies. But capitalism also reinvigorated slavery in the American South to satisfy the ravenous hunger for cotton that could now be milled into cheap textiles for the world. Hence the connection of places like South Carolina to the fortunes of Manchester; or the still-Spanish island of Cuba to the newly built cotton mills of Barcelona.

4. The persistence of slavery, backed by coercive state power to keep people enslaved, not only seems to be a blunt challenge to liberal political ideals and the cloudy future of the world's largest republic. It seemed a direct challenge to another side of capitalism: growing numbers of workingmen who feared that their free labor must now compete with the slave labor deployed by an expanding "slave power."

5. And as formal slavery (and serfdom) finally disappeared in Europe, then in the Americas, new forms of mass servitude arose. A whole new set of ideas would eventually be needed to engage the debate of how to cope with large, industrial societies. But we'll get to that in a couple of weeks ...

For now, Week 4 focuses on the transformations that get truly underway in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s.

Best wishes,

Philip Zelikow

The Modern World: Global History since 1760 Course Team

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