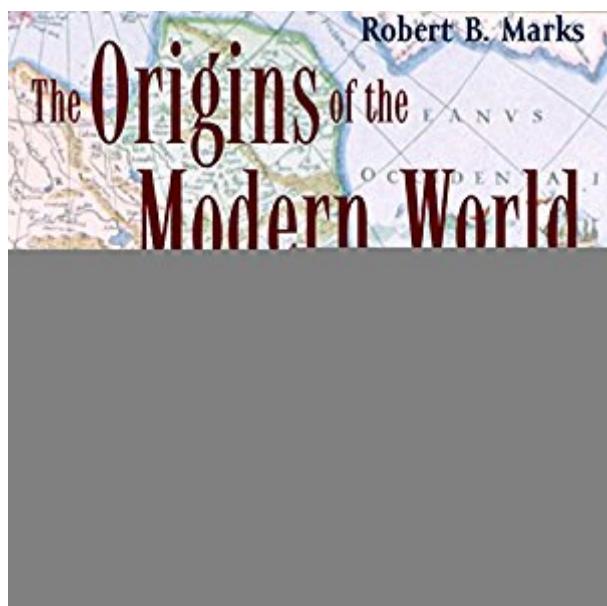


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The Origins Of The Modern World: A Global And Ecological Narrative From The Fifteenth To The Twenty-first Century, 2nd Edition (World Social Change)



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

Each semester, history instructors must select the required reading materials for the next semester's classes. A conscientious teacher might drown in the many options. There are always

new titles to fill the captive demand for required purchases. Increasingly, these options come with new bells, whistles, digitized archival collections, and promises of the latest breaking scholarship. That text over there provides a web based bibliography, this one a helpful and hyperlinked timeline. Over here we have a "pedagogical media system" interfacing with the lecture through PowerPoint slides, and boasting a Pod Cast library for additional streaming course content. Tending to be an easy "mark" for these techno enhancements, I strive to find new ways to cram more content into any history unit. Yet I have been begging any press that would listen for one simple innovation--a textbook. Unlike most available textbooks though, this one would be interesting. It would lead students toward better study habits, shepherd them into more recent ways of thinking about history, and it would show--by example--how to cite their sources in a scholarly manner. I usually suggest that the press find an author who actually teaches undergraduate students. Robert B. Marks' *Origins of the Modern World* answers my pleas. So before I get into the text of the textbook, please indulge this instructor's very quick applause for several important features. First, the book is printed in a clear type intended to be read without a magnifying glass. Second, it uses the same citation style most historians require students to use in term papers. So the smart young student in the Che tee shirt will not be pointing out that the textbook fits the syllabus description of plagiarism.

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 methodolgocial 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.

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