

What is the "West"? Where's It Going?

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The course will include five sessions, each combining instructor lectures with a minimum of 30 minutes of discussion. The topics are as follows:

Session 1 – How did the concept of a “West” originate?

When did the term “West” come into use? And where can we begin to see a common Western identity first being defined? Classical Greek and Roman ideas about identity. The roots of “us vs. them” thinking. Perspectives from medieval and Renaissance Europe.

Session 2 – Ideas of the “West” in More Modern Times

Deals with period from the rise of relatively modern states, through the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, the rise of nationalism and imperialism, and the origins of “declinism.” National specificities and cross-cutting interests.

Session 3 – The 20th Century: A “West” Forged in War

How the two world wars of the 20th century and the Russian Revolution led to the definition of “West” that still largely prevails.

Session 4 – Rethinking the “West”

How the end of the Cold War and economic globalization forced a rethinking of what it means to be “Western” and saw the rise of strategic competitors and alternatives to the “Western model.”

Session 5 – Impact of the Russian War on Ukraine

Will the West come out stronger? What can hold it together going forward?

There are no prerequisites and no required readings. Instructor will provide lecture outlines in advance of class. Lectures will feature use of PowerPoints and perhaps some brief sound recordings.