

GERMAN 270

Sovereignty and the Limits of Globalization and Technology

Winter Quarter 2019

Russell Berman and Peter Thiel

Tuesday 3:00 PM- 5:50

The current historical moment appears to be marked by opposition to globalization, which has emerged in many countries in the various forms of populism, restrictive trade policies, attacks on “neo-liberalism,” protest parties and localism. These positions are sometimes accompanied by appeals to national interests and cultural traditions. This new mood is viewed as a break with a previous paradigm of international institutions and “world citizenship.”

This seminar proceeds from this contemporary reassertion of state sovereignty against market processes and internationalist claims in order to inquire into the historical, theoretical and cultural roots of the problem. Has the process of globalization stalled? What are the implications for the state and its aspiration for sovereignty? And how does technology, which contributed so much to the process of globalization, fit into this picture, especially in the guise of new technologies? This seminar therefore explores the tensions between state and market, their cultural contexts, technological innovation, and the importance of community belonging.

Enrollment is limited: To be considered for enrollment in this course, please complete and submit the short application available at the Explorecourses site by October 19, 2018, 11:59pm PST. Students accepted to participate in this course will be notified on October 26, 2018 by 6:00pm. Auditors are not permitted. Application:
<http://web.stanford.edu/~conorato/german270.fb>

Course Requirements: In addition to completing all the reading and participating in discussion:

- 1) A two-page (approx. 500 words) reading response each week on the current texts. Do not provide summaries but instead offer your thoughts on how these texts contribute to our inquiry into globalization, sovereignty and technology. Feel free to highlight problematic or difficult passages.
- 2) Each student will present one 10-15 minute oral presentation on the day's readings. There will be multiple presentations at each session, so the presenters will be expected to coordinate among themselves so as not to be repetitive. Introduce the readings, explain their importance and offer your criticism and discussion questions.
- 3) A term paper due at the last session, March 12. Discuss the topic in advance with the instructors. You may write on any of the texts, providing closer interpretation. However you are also welcome to discuss current political, technological or cultural developments—in light of the seminar's reflections—and offer your account.

1 - **Globalization: Prophecy versus History**.....**January 8th**

Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" in *The National Interest* (1989) ~25pp

Kishore Mahbubani, *Has the West Lost It?* (2018) ~90pp

Stephen R. Platt, "How Britain's First Mission to China Went Wrong" (2018) ~5 pp

Norman Angell, title chapter from *The Great Illusion* (first published 1909; fourth American edition 1913) ~25pp

In the summer of 1989, just as tanks rolled through Tiananmen Square, but just before the Berlin Wall fell, American political scientist Francis Fukuyama declared the "end of history": different countries might take more or less time to get there, but the inevitable destination for everyone would be liberal democracy. Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani reviews the historical record of American leadership during this time of faith in globalization: a failed war in Iraq, a disastrous financial crisis, and a top trading partner that just declared its leader president for life. Were prophecies of success related to this history of failure? Norman Angell's *Great Illusion* (fourth American edition published in 1913) and historian Stephen Platt's vignette of China before the Opium War introduce two other moments, one and two centuries ago, when leaders believed that global commerce would bring about peace and unity.

2 - **Universalism: From the Tower of Babel to the Last Things**.....**January 15th**

Genesis 11:1-9 (The Tower of Babel) ~1p

Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (1949) pp iv-207 ~210pp

Revelation 17 (Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots) ~1p

Would anybody ever have believed in a single destiny for the whole world without first having believed in a single deity? Philosopher Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History* gives an answer while it reviews all the ways the West has understood history's meaning, from the Bible to Kant and Marx.

**3 - From 1914 to 1949: World WarJanuary
22nd**

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (1928; 1932 edition) ~100pp
Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea* (1940) ~100pp
Alain de Benoist, "Nazism and Communism: Evil Twins?" (1998) ~19pp

Carl Schmitt rebuts universal empire with a vision of friends versus enemies. Alain de Benoist suggests that even the most extreme enemies may come to resemble each other. How does a geopolitical reading of land and sea powers map onto questions of globalization, culture, and community?

**4 - The 1950s: Toward a world state?January
29th**

Alexandre Kojève, *Tyranny and Wisdom* (1950) in *On Tyranny* ~40pp
Leo Strauss, "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*" (1959) in *On Tyranny* ~40pp

Why not have a world government? If there is a single rational way to rule, why shouldn't rationality rule the world? Progressive Russian-French emigré Alexandre Kojève, who helped lay the groundwork for the European Union, engages conservative German-American emigré Leo Strauss in a classic debate about the "universal and homogenous state."

**5 - From the '60s to the '10s: Optimism to Stagnation
.....February 5th**

Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *The American Challenge* (1967) pp 2-50 ~48pp
Robert Gordon, "Is U.S. Economic Growth Over?" (2012) ~21pp
John Horgan, "Why I Think Science Is Ending" (1997) ~10pp

M. Teitelbaum, "The Myth of the Science and Engineering Shortage" (2014) ~5pp
Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites* (1996) pp 3-79;
pp 161-175 ~90pp
Vaclav Smil, "Can Trump bring manufacturing jobs back?"
(2017) ~2pp

Proponents of progress promise(d) economic growth and technological innovation. Yet authors this week suggest that progress may have been oversold. Journalist Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber in 1967 warned his fellow Europeans of coming eclipse as a result of accelerating economic and technological progress in America. But economist Robert Gordon, looking back from 2012, reviews an actual record of economic and technological stagnation. John Horgan argues that pure science, too, has reached a plateau. Michael Teitelbaum suggests that alarmism about a shortage of scientists has perversely made science a less attractive career. The gap between the mirage of progress and the reality of stagnation—experienced unequally across the social spectrum—has had cultural and political consequences, as described by Christopher Lasch. Vaclav Smil raises a politically relevant point about the unique importance of manufacturing.

6 - Varieties of Universalism and Cosmopolitanism **February 12^t**

Ingeborg Bachmann, "Three Paths to the Lake" (1972) ~95pp
Benedict XVI, the Regensburg Lecture (2006) ~20pp
Barack Obama, the Cairo Speech (2009) ~13pp
K. A. Appiah, "There is No Such Thing as Western
Civilization"
(2016) ~10pp
J. D. Davidson & Lord William Rees-Mogg, "Transcending
Locality"
(1997) ~29pp
Kai-fu Lee, *AI Superpowers* (2018) ~100pp excerpt TBD

Austrian author Ingeborg Bachmann's story explores the subjective experience of a cosmopolitan life, amid questions of empire and the authenticity of provincial localism. Benedict XVI and Barack Obama both address Islam, one from the point of view of rationalist Catholic universalism, the other from the point of view of liberal humanitarian universalism. K. A. Appiah argues for cosmopolitanism and against ideas of Western uniqueness. But if, as he claims, there is "no such thing as Western Civilization," would he also claim that there is no East Asian civilization? No Islamic civilization? Is civilization antithetical to any local specification? James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg could be said to herald a different kind of cosmopolitanism, one based on the separation of money from government. Their view of technology transcending politics raises the question of cryptocurrency: is this the ultimate challenge to state sovereignty? At the opposite end of information technology, Kai-fu Lee predicts that the implementation of Artificial Intelligence will be the key to China's coming economic dominance.

7 - The Future of World Order.....February 19th

Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (2018) ~234 pp
Liu Mingfu, "The Chinese Dream to Overtake America"
(2015) ~5pp

Garden variety progressivism stereotypically denounces empire and imperialism, but what is the opposite of empire? Yoram Hazony says it is nationalism, for which he offers a sustained defense. Former PLA officer Liu Mingfu speaks for one particularly strong strain of contemporary nationalism.

8 - Actually existing globalization: Corruption on the periphery.....February 26th

Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State* (2015) ~200pp
Rory Stewart, "The Irresistible Illusion" in *London Review of Books* (2009) ~9pp

Based on long experience in US-occupied Afghanistan, Sarah Chayes argues that corruption fuels violence. But who will take responsibility for ridding the world of corruption, and how could it be done? Rory Stewart contrasts the realism of 19th century British imperialists with the abstraction and impracticality of contemporary bureaucrats. This week looks at what has actually happened where Western force has been used to spread democracy.

9 - **Actually existing globalization: Consumption in the metropole**..... **March 5th**

Elizabeth Currid-Halkett, "Conspicuous consumption is over" (2017) ~2pp

Amy Chua, "Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior" (2011) ~5pp

Tom Wright & Bradley Hope, "The Billion-Dollar Mystery Man and the Wildest Party Vegas Ever Saw" (2018) ~10pp

René Girard, "Triangular Desire," from *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1961) ~50pp

Geoffrey West, "Toward a Science of Cities," from *Scale* (2017) ~65pp

Is there any future outside of big cities? What are big cities for, anyway? This week turns to questions of imitation and rivalry on a global scale, especially as intensified within and diffused from metropolises like London and New York. Elizabeth Currid-Halkett describes the consumption habits of the upper middle class; Amy Chua describes the methods of child rearing intended to get kids into that class. Tom Wright and Bradley Hope's reporting on the man who stole \$7 billion USD from the 1MDB sovereign wealth fund combines imitative consumption with the previous week's theme of corruption. René Girard contributes a theory of imitative desire; Geoffrey West outlines a theory of cities. Is the concentration of talent in a small handful of cities irreversible?

10 - **Antichrist and Apocalypse**..... **March 12th**

René Girard, "Hamlet's Dull Revenge," from *Theater of Envy* (1991) ~19pp
Vladimir Solovyov, *War, Progress, and the End of History* (1900) ~180pp

What was Hamlet waiting for? René Girard reinterprets this classic avatar of Western man: in an age when technology has made it possible to destroy the world, perhaps we should understand hesitation before vengeance. Vladimir Solovyov looks forward from 1900 to a speculative end of history, including intercontinental war and an Anti-Christ preaching universal harmony. What did he get right? What does the end of history look like to us today?

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Books to purchase (multiple chapters assigned). These will be ordered at the bookstore and will be placed on reserve in Green Library.

(Note: Servan-Schreiber and Solovyov may only be available for purchase on Kindle. We will try to identify other opportunities for access.)

Kishore Mahbubani, *Has the West Lost It?* (London: Allen Lane, 2018)

\$14.68 hardcover

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Has-West-Lost-Kishore-Mahbubani/dp/0241312868>

Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1949)

\$27.90 paperback

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Meaning-History-Theological-Implications-Philosophy/dp/0226495558>

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007)

\$21.10 paperback

- Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Concept-Political-Expanded-Carl-Schmitt/dp/0226738922>
- Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea* (Candor, NY: Telos Press, 2015)
\$21.95 paperback
Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Land-Sea-World-Historical-Carl-Schmitt/dp/0914386565>
- Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013)
\$30.00 paperback
Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Tyranny-Corrected-Including-Strauss-Kojève-Correspondence/dp/022603013X>
- Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, *The American Challenge* (Paris: Versilio, 2014)
\$9.99 on Kindle; otherwise out of print
Link: <https://www.amazon.com/American-Challenge-Jean-Jacques-Servan-Schreiber-ebook/dp/B00KLDRT0U>
- Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites* (New York: Norton, 1996)
\$18.42 paperback
Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Revolt-Elites-Betrayal-Democracy/dp/0393313719>
- Kai-fu Lee, *AI Superpowers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018)
Link: <https://www.amazon.com/AI-Superpowers-China-Silicon-Valley/dp/132854639X>
- Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018)
\$19.49 hardcover
Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Virtue-Nationalism-Yoram-Hazony/dp/1541645375>
- Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State* (New York: Norton, 2016)
\$15.72 paperback
Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Thieves-State-Corruption-Threatens-Security/dp/0393352285>
- Vladimir Solovyov, *War, Progress, and the End of History: Three Conversations Including a Short Story of the Anti-Christ* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne, 1990)
\$9.99 on Kindle; otherwise out of print

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/War-Progress-History-Vladimir-Solovyov-ebook/dp/B00AR5HB96/>

Journal articles:

Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" pp 3-18 in *The National Interest* No. 16 Summer 1989

Link: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>

Alain de Benoist, "Nazism and Communism: Evil Twins?" pp178-192 in *Telos* Summer 1998

Link:

<http://journal.telospress.com/content/1998/112/178.full.pdf>

Single chapters from books (available as pdf on the Canvas site)

Ingeborg Bachmann, "Three Paths to the Lake," pp 117-212 in *Three Paths to the Lake: Stories by Ingeborg Bachmann* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1989)

James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg, "Transcending Locality: The Emergence of the Cybereconomy," Chapter 7 (pp 178-206) in *The Sovereign Individual: Mastering the Transition to the Information Age* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) [the same chapter is found on pp 196-224 in the Touchstone paperback edition]

Geoffrey West, "Toward a Science of Cities," Chapter 7 (pp 269-324) in *Scale: The Universal Laws of Growth, Innovation, Sustainability, and the Pace of Life in Organisms, Cities, Economies, and Companies* (New York: Penguin, 2017)

René Girard, "Triangular Desire," Chapter 1 (pp 1-52) in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965)

René Girard, "Hamlet's Dull Revenge," Chapter 30 (pp 271-289) in
Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)

Articles, speeches, and book excerpts available free online:

Stephen R. Platt, "How Britain's First Mission to China Went Wrong," *LA Review of Books China Channel*, May 18, 2018; excerpt from *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China's Last Golden Age* (New York: Knopf, 2018)

Link: <https://chinachannel.org/2018/05/18/macartney>

Norman Angell, "The Great Illusion," Part I Chapter III (pp 28-49) in *The Great Illusion* (New York: Putnam, 1913)

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/38535/38535-h/38535-h.htm>

Robert Gordon, "Is U.S. Economic Growth Over?" NBER Working Paper No. 18315, August 2012

Link: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18315.pdf>

John Horgan, "Why I Think Science Is Ending," *Edge* blog conversation, May 6, 1997; addressing arguments from his book *The End of Science: Facing The Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age* (Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996)

Link: https://www.edge.org/conversation/john_horgan-why-i-think-science-is-ending

Michael Teitelbaum, "The Myth of the Science and Engineering Shortage," *The Atlantic*, March 19, 2014

Link:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/03/the-myth-of-the-science-and-engineering-shortage/284359/>

Vaclav Smil, "Can Trump bring manufacturing jobs back?" MIT Press Blog, January 20, 2017; addressing arguments from his book *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2013)

Link: <https://mitpress.mit.edu/blog/can-trump-bring-manufacturing-jobs-back-conversation-vaclav-smil>

Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections," Lecture at Regensburg, September 12, 2006

Link: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html

Barack Obama, Remarks to the Muslim world, Lecture at Cairo, June 4, 2009

Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>

K. A. Appiah, "There is No Such Thing as Western Civilization" *The Guardian*, November 9, 2016

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/09/western-civilisation-appiah-reith-lecture>

Liu Mingfu, "The Chinese Dream to Overtake America" *The Atlantic*, June 4, 2015; excerpt from *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era* (New York: CN Times, 2015)

Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/06/china-dream-liu-mingfu-power/394748/>

Rory Stewart, "The Irresistible Illusion" (*London Review of Books* Vol. 31 No. 13, July 9, 2009)

Link: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n13/rory-stewart/the-irresistible-illusion>

Elizabeth Currid-Halkett, "Conspicuous consumption is over" *Aeon*, June 7, 2017; excerpt from *The Sum of Small Things: A Theory of the Aspirational Class* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017)

Link: <https://aeon.co/ideas/conspicuous-consumption-is-over-its-all-about-intangibles-now>

Amy Chua, "Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior" *Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2011; excerpt from *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (New York, Penguin: 2011)

Link: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704111504576059713528698754>

Tom Wright and Bradley Hope, "The Billion-Dollar Mystery Man and the Wildest Party Vegas Ever Saw," *Wall Street Journal*, September 15, 2018; excerpt from *Billion Dollar Whale: The Man Who Fooled Wall Street, Hollywood, and the World* (New York: Hachette, 2018)

Link: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-billion-dollar-mystery-man-and-the-wildest-party-vegas-ever-saw-1536984061>