

**History 3823F**  
**Global Twenty-First Century History**  
**Fall 2023**

*N.B. It is anticipated that this course will not be offered in 2024-25.*

Instructor: **Professor William J. Turkel**

Email: **wturkel@uwo.ca**

This is a **draft** syllabus. Please see the course site on OWL for a final version.

**Course Description**

A thematic introduction to 21st-century history focused on phenomena that characterize our age: the global connectivity of supply chains, planetary-scale computation, the War on Terror, and unprecedented ecological change. Contemporary events are contextualized in an interdisciplinary fashion at time scales ranging from days to millions of years.

**Prerequisite(s):**

Any 0.5 or 1.0 Essay course.

**Course Syllabus**

***Expected Preparation***

You will be given a short collection of readings to do before each scheduled meeting. It is crucial that you take this requirement seriously and read the materials carefully. Since teamwork is an essential component of this class (and your grade), students who are not prepared for class will not only be letting themselves down, but some of their classmates, too.

***Participation and Professionalism***

You are required to participate in each scheduled meeting. *Failure to participate in more than two meetings without prior approval or a note from your academic counsellor will result in a failing grade.* Since you will be working closely with others using teleconferencing and shared online documents as well as in person, it is important to be respectful, to share your own ideas and to listen carefully to the ideas of others.

***Teamwork and Peer Evaluation***

Each scheduled meeting you will be randomly assigned to a team of about 7 people for that day's activities. Grades for team activities will be shared by all members of the team. At the end of each team activity, you will submit a very brief peer evaluation for the members of your team. I

will use these assessments, in conjunction with my own, to determine your individual contribution to team assignments.

### ***Learning Outcomes***

At the conclusion of this course students will be able to

- Recognize and analyze agency problems, transaction costs, network effects, nonlinearity and complexity in the historical development of contemporary events and processes
- Situate aspects of the present moment with respect to historical explanations from a range of specialist literatures
- Use computational tools that allow small teams to collaborate in the analysis of digital sources
- Understand the fundamental critique that the humanities pose to algorithmic thinking and apply that critique in a variety of contemporary settings (metrics, big data, artificial intelligence)

### **Methods of Evaluation**

There will be five assignments, worth 20% each, spread uniformly throughout the term. Each assignment has an individual portion, a team portion, and a portion that combines my assessment of in-class work with peer assessments of the student's contribution to team performance.

Each assignment has a suggested due date and, a week later, a zero date. If you hand in your assignment before the zero date, you will receive full credit for your work. After the zero date, it will be worth nothing.

*Students must submit all course assignments to pass the course.*

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, you must provide valid medical or other supporting documentation to Academic Counseling as soon as possible.

### **Course Materials**

There is one required book:

Madsbjerg, Christian. *Sensemaking: What Makes Human Intelligence Essential in the Age of the Algorithm*. Little, Brown, 2019.

All other course materials will be provided electronically on OWL.

You will also be required to use software provided by the university:

- To participate in class and team meetings you will need to install and log in to Zoom  
<https://wts.uwo.ca/zoom/index.html>
- You will need access to Microsoft Office tools (especially Word, PowerPoint and Excel). These are available through your Office 365 account  
[https://wts.uwo.ca/office\\_365/index.html](https://wts.uwo.ca/office_365/index.html)
- Class sessions and graded assignments will also require teamwork that will be conducted through MS Teams  
[https://wts.uwo.ca/microsoft\\_teams/index.html](https://wts.uwo.ca/microsoft_teams/index.html)

### Course Schedule and Readings

- **Week 01. Introduction.** Defining the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Five Global Phenomena; Concepts and Methods.
- **Week 02. The Terrorist's Dilemma.** Al Qaeda and 9/11; Agency Problems; Transaction and Information Costs; Global Outlaws; Following the Money.
- **Week 03. Everything Becomes War.** War in the Age of Intelligent Machines; Drones; Cyberwar and Active Measures.
- **Week 04. Black Box Society.** Moore's Law; Identity by Algorithm; Social Sorting and Network Inequality; Spam, Spyware and Trolls; Transparency and Conspiracy.
- **Week 05. Secrecy, Privacy and Anonymity.** Mass Surveillance; Cryptography; Hacktivism and the Dark Web.
- **Week 06. Consent of the Networked.** Social Production; Contested Expertise; Enclosure of the Commons; Protest and Social Change.
- **Week 07. Global Supply Chains.** Licit and Illicit Flows; the Deadly Life of Logistics; Connectography; Extrastatecraft.
- **Week 08. Capitalist Ruins.** Stuff; Attention and Advertising; Neoliberalism; Financial Crisis; Ordinary Affects.
- **Week 09. Anthropocene.** Urbanization; Fossil Fuel Dependency; the Dispossessed; Risk, Catastrophe, Collapse and Extinction.
- **Week 10. Deep History.** Coevolution and Domestication; Companion Species; Contagion and Chaos; Food Security.
- **Week 11. After Now.** Technosphere; the Stack; Utopia; Posthumanities; Superintelligences.

**Additional Statements**

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.

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