

Age of Conflict: Where Are We in History: Precedents and Predictions

This class will apply the historical methodology of Carroll Quigley's *Evolution of Civilizations* to current events in an effort to explain the causes of our current situation, discuss historical precedents of comparable periods and analyze possible futures. Quigley postulated that civilizations evolve through seven stages: mixture, gestation, expansion, conflict, universal empire, decay and invasion or collapse. The United States and Western Civilization currently are experiencing an age of conflict. The evolution of a civilization through these stages is driven largely by social instruments that meet human needs in six areas: military, political, economic, social, religious and intellectual. The success of these instruments in meeting these needs produces an age of expansion, but eventually the instruments no longer work as effectively as before. This increasing dysfunction can be the result of changes in the circumstances in which the instrument operates or the institutional corruption of the instrument. In either event, the increasing dysfunction produces an age of conflict, which results either in reform and renewed expansion or a consolidation of coercive power into an age of universal empire before ultimately collapsing.

The United States and Western Civilization seem to be in an age of conflict, and this class will ask why that is occurring. The primary content of the course will be to examine Western Civilization and the United States on each of these six levels of human need and ask, what has worked in the postwar decades, is it still working and, if not, why not? The ultimate objective will be to discuss possible reforms and discuss what may occur if reform is not possible. Each class will compare the current period to the last Age of Conflict in Western Civilization: the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which led to the World Wars and the Depression. If possible, guests in each area of study or members of the class will be asked to address these questions and offer possible reforms.