**Instructions Paper 1: Guns, Germs, and Steel Due Friday Sept 13 In-Class**

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to the idea of *historiography* as a key aspect of academic history. In class, we discussed how the academic discipline of history differs from other ways of knowing the past (family histories, movies and culture, politics and nostalgia, etc). Academic historians seek to explain historical events by weighing and evaluating different factors of causation … and they do not always agree on which factors are most important for answering our most significant questions. Historiography is the history of those scholarly debates among historians.

We posed the question: “Why Europe? What historical events set Europe on a path that would shape the modern world through violent colonialism?”

In class lectures, I provided an explanation based on *The Great Divergence*, that a series of crises in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shook European assumptions and worldviews so deeply Europeans could no longer continue on the same historical trajectory and were forced to chart a new path. The argument here is based on changes in culture, economics, and social upheaval.

Jared Diamond offers a different explanation. He sees cultural or political or technological changes as *secondary* causes. He offers deeper analysis of geography and the development of agriculture as the key underlying factors to explain Europe’s eventual rise to global dominance. Using the text and the materials from class, write a paper addressing the question below.

**Papers should be 2-3 pages (approx. 500-750 words), Double Spaced, Standard Fonts (Times New Roman or Arial) and Margins. Papers should support their arguments with references and direct quotations, and use Chicago Style citations (See Citation Guidelines). You should ONLY use course materials. No web or Generative AI. Do your own thinking.**

**The paper should be written as a prose essay (NOT Bullet point answers to the questions below), however, the structure of the questions may help organize your essay as it moves from straightforward analysis to a consideration of broader meanings and applications.**

1.Analyze the nature of academic historical debates. Compare the different explanations for the origins of Europe colonialism. What do academic debates tell us about how we understand the past?

a. What is Jared Diamond’s argument and how does it connect with or challenge the explanations from class lectures? How does the idea of scale alter the questions we ask of history and the conclusions that we can draw? What are benefits or drawbacks of focusing on the large scale or long time horizon?

b. Is either explanation necessarily right or wrong? Can both be true and yet offer dramatically different explanations? How do we reconcile those differences? Does historical debate create uncertainty about the “T” truth of the past and allow for any historical narrative to stake a claim to truth? Or, how do the methods of historical research continue to set academic scholarship apart for other ways of knowing the past?