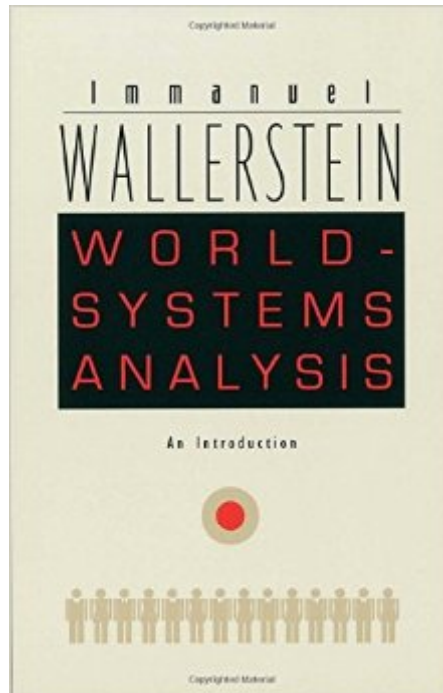


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# World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction



## Synopsis

In *World-Systems Analysis*, Immanuel Wallerstein provides a concise and accessible introduction to the comprehensive approach that he pioneered thirty years ago to understanding the history and development of the modern world. Since Wallerstein first developed world-systems analysis, it has become a widely utilized methodology within the historical social sciences and a common point of reference in discussions of globalization. Now, for the first time in one volume, Wallerstein offers a succinct summary of world-systems analysis and a clear outline of the modern world-system, describing the structures of knowledge upon which it is based, its mechanisms, and its future. Wallerstein explains the defining characteristics of world-systems analysis: its emphasis on world-systems rather than nation-states, on the need to consider historical processes as they unfold over long periods of time, and on combining within a single analytical framework bodies of knowledge usually viewed as distinct from one another—such as history, political science, economics, and sociology. He describes the world-system as a social reality comprised of interconnected nations, firms, households, classes, and identity groups of all kinds. He identifies and highlights the significance of the key moments in the evolution of the modern world-system: the development of a capitalist world-economy in the sixteenth-century, the beginning of two centuries of liberal centrism in the French Revolution of 1789, and the undermining of that centrism in the global revolts of 1968. Intended for general readers, students, and experienced practitioners alike, this book presents a complete overview of world-systems analysis by its original architect.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When Robert Strange McNamara became Secretary of Defense in 1961, one of the innovative ideas that he introduced was an analytic methodology called 'Systems Analysis' which was then in vogue in private industry. The Pentagon then spent the next decade trying to figure out what Systems Analysis was and how it could apply to military issues. Systems Analysis in point of fact is a very useful analytic tool that recognizes that problems are best solved when viewed not in isolation, but as part of a larger integrated whole. While this is a perfectly valid analytic methodology, it fell out of favor as a management tool once it became apparent it was not a solution to bad management styles (such as those of McNamara himself). Yet while Systems Analysis was enjoying its moment in the Sun, academic scholars from every discipline tried to adapt Systems Analysis to their particular discipline. Which brings us to Immanuel Wallerstein and his book "World Systems Analysis." Wallerstein has postulated that a world wide system could be described as a "Capitalist World Economy" and that system could be analyzed in accordance with the principles of systems analysis. Several things need to be noted at this point. First, 'Capitalist World Economy' is in itself not a pejorative term, but simply describes a very specific kind of economic system. Second this term which Wallerstein insists on using really is more widely known under the rubric of "Globalization" which indeed can be studied by means of systems analysis. To his great credit Wallerstein has spent the last thirty years studying and refining the application of systems analysis methodology to worldwide problems. While he is clearly influenced by the works of Karl Marx (and probably George Hegel as well), this does not negate his basic premise that the world can be understood best in terms of world wide systems that can indeed be subjected rigorous analysis. A good and accessible book that provides an alternative way of looking at the phenomena associated with Globalization.

Do NOT buy the hard-copy. obscures the fact that the paperback is available, this is a very thin book, buy the paperback World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction (A John Hope Franklin Center Book). I would have been furious had I bought the hard copy at the grotesquely inflated price for 100 pages at 1.5 line spacing. The big eye-opener for me was that "World Systems" is NOT the same as Whole Systems. World Systems is entirely anthropomorphic and addresses the inter-relationships among forms of human organization, with the state and the marketplace/capitalism being the primary focus. This is a 2004 work in its 5th printing, the author is a giant in his field that I am surprised to learn of so late (I am 57 years old with multiple graduate degrees), and therefore this overview is a most welcome work in my reading. The World Systems work originated in the 1970's concurrently with the Whole Systems work of Buckminster Fuller, the Meadows, and Robert

Ackoff. The heart of the book is found on page 88 after a very fine lead-up that explains the three competing human ideologies of conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism (anti-system). QUOTE: "The key element of the debate is the degree to which any social system, in this case the future one we are constructing, will lean in one direction or the other on two long-standing central issues of social organization--liberty and equality--issues that are more closely intertwined than social thought in the modern world-system has been willing to assert." My notes from this rewarding read: + Science and philosophy did not part until the mid-18th century, they have been two cultures in conflict since then. See *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*. + In the 19th century both split further (philosophy-humanities spinning off social sciences that remain moribund and unable to deal with a tough hybrid problem, "social reality" + The French Revolution spawned the social sciences in that it introduced the concept of public sovereignty, replacing "subjects" with "citizens," and creating a puzzle still not fully understood. + History has valued the scientific method, but tended to stay closer to the humanities. Who writes history matters--up to this point, history has generally been written within five Western nations, and tended to assume that indigenous tribes lack "history" which is erroneous. + Western approach to the non-western was to divide between "Orientalists" and anthropologists, the first studying China and "the East" while the second studied indigenous tribes in their CURRENT condition, assuming that nothing from their past was relevant. See *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* for the more righteous understanding. + The tendency of all "scholars" has been to study differences (the 20%) rather than generic commonalities (the 80%). + 1945 and the Cold War led to the 3rd world being a battleground (the author does not venture into "High Cabal" arena or the military-industrial complex) and also led to an explosion in higher education (GI Bill) and consequently a massive fragmentation of knowledge as area studies proliferated to meet the PhD need for "originality." + 1945-1970 saw four "debates"---Core-periphery and dependency, the first focusing on the unequal trade between the Western core and the periphery nations, the second focusing on corporate predation. See *Global Reach: The Power of the Multinational Corporations* from the 1970's and more recently *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. ---Marxist discussion of the Asiatic mode of production (neither communism nor capitalism)---Transition from feudalism to capitalism (which is all consuming and NOT to be confused with a free and fair marketplace)---"Total history," the Annales group in France, a holistic approach to anthropomorphism. IMPORTANT: Structure of knowledge impacts on what you know, how you know. 1968 was a revolution in human affairs, with student and labor and other protesters focused on university support of the status quo, the neglect of oppressed groups, and the need to break down barriers. See *Weapons of Mass Instruction: A*

Schoolteacher's Journey through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling. The balance of the book is about world empires (state dominates) versus world economies (capitalism dominates), with three types of economics: reciprocal, redistributive (rich take from the poor and concentrate wealth), and market (theoretical). There is a good discussion of data and the need to FIND data, not just study the problems for which data is easily available. QUOTE: "TimeSpaces are constantly constructed realities whose construction is part and parcel of the social reality we are analyzing." Author defines capitalism as the system that gives priority to the ENDLESS ACCUMULATION of capital, and observes that the multiplicity of states and corporations is needed to give capitalists the wiggle room to secure advantage. 5 kinds of income: wage, subsistence, petty commodity, rent, transfer payments. 3 kinds of externalization of cost to society: toxicity, exhaustion of resources, transport cost (infrastructure funded by taxpayer but for the primary benefit of commerce) Socializing instruments vital to the state: households, schools, and the armed forces "Class struggle" is about the distribution of surplus value. Politics of inclusion or exclusion has dominated for two centuries, driven by the conservative-liberal debate over whether people are inherently animal (bad) or human (good). While universal suffrage is the ideal, the use of race, sex, and ethnicity to exclude and subordinate is common. INSIGHT: Use of military power is a sign of weakness that signifies the end of hegemony. QUOTE: "Hegemony is crucial, repeated, and always relatively brief." Geoculture is fought out across three fields: ideologies, radical anti-systemic movements (I would include gangs, terrorists, and drop-outs in this latter group), and the social sciences. INSIGHT: Internal contradictions within hegemony, state, or corporation, will inevitably surface and cannot be denied. We must expect wild fluctuation in all things, for the internal contradictions of both state and corporations are just now beginning to bubble. INSIGHT: The future of humanity will be fought on three battlefields, the intellectual, the moral, and the political. This is our challenge, we cannot opt out. Among the many excellent works the author lists in his suggestions for further reading is *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History*. See also: *Critical Path* *High Noon* *20 Global Problems, 20 Years to Solve Them* *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*

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