Religion and Global Modernity
Modernity presented a challenge to the world’s religions

- “advanced” thinkers of the eighteenth–twentieth centuries believed that supernatural religion was headed for extinction
- sharp decline in religious belief and practice in some places
- spread of scientific culture convinced small minorities that the only realities worth considering were those that could be measured scientifically
Modernity presented a challenge to the world’s religions

- but the most prominent trends of the last century have been the further spread of major world religions, their resurgence in new forms, and their attacks on elements of a secular and global modernity

- Buddhist ideas and practices were well received in the West
  - Christianity spread even further; majority of Christians are no longer in Europe and the United States
  - Islam also spread widely
  - religious pluralism on a level never before seen
“fundamentalism” is a major reaction against modernization and globalization
- a militant piety, defensive and exclusive
- has developed in every major religious tradition

many features of the modern world appear threatening to established religion
- have upset customary class, family, and gender relationships
- nation-states (often associated with a particular religion) were undermined by the global economy and foreign culture
- disruption was often caused by foreigners from the West
Fundamentalism on a Global Scale

- fundamentalists have responded with selective rejection of modernity
- the term “fundamentalism” comes from U.S. religious conservatives in the early twentieth century; called for a return to the fundamentals of Christianity
  - many saw the United States on the edge of a moral abyss
  - in the 1970s, began to enter the political arena as the religious right
- another fundamentalism, called Hindutva (Hindu nationalism), developed in India in the 1980s
  - formed a political party (Bharatiya Janata Party)
  - opposed state efforts to cater to Muslims, Sikhs, and the lower castes
  - BJP promoted a distinct Hindu identity in education, culture, and religion
Creating Islamic Societies: Resistance and Renewal in the World of Islam

- Islamic fundamentalism is the most prominent fundamentalism of the late twentieth century
  - Osama bin Laden and the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001
  - WTC destruction is only one sign of a much bigger phenomenon

- great disappointments in the Muslim world by the 1970s
  - new states (e.g., Egypt, Iran, Algeria) pursued basically Western and secular policies
  - new policies were largely unsuccessful
  - foreign intrusion continued
Creating Islamic Societies: Resistance and Renewal in the World of Islam

- growing attraction of an Islamic alternative to Western models
  - foundations laid early in the century (e.g., Mawlana Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb)
  - effort to return to true Islam was labeled *jihad*

- penetration of fundamentalist thought in the Islamic world
  - increase in religious observance
  - many women voluntarily adopted modest dress and veils
  - many governments used Islamic rhetoric and practice as anchor
  - series of Islamic organizations were formed to provide social services
  - Islamic activists became leaders in unions and professional organizations
  - entry into politics
Creating Islamic Societies: Resistance and Renewal in the World of Islam

◉ some groups sought overthrow of compromised regimes
  - the Egyptian Islamic Jihad assassinated Anwar Sadat in 1981
  - in 1979, a radical Islamic group in Mecca tried to overthrow the Saudi government
  - Islamic movements took power in Iran (1979) and Afghanistan (1996); implemented radical Islamization

◉ attacks on hostile foreign powers
  - Hamas (Palestine) and Hezbollah (Lebanon) targeted Israel
  - bin Laden founded al-Qaeda in response to Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979
  - in 1998, al-Qaeda issued a fatwa (religious edict) declaring war against America
  - attacks on Western interests in East Africa, Indonesia, Great Britain, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen
  - the “great enemy” was irreligious Western-style modernity, U.S. imperialism, and economic globalization
Religious Alternatives to Fundamentalism

- militancy isn’t the only religious response to modernity
- considerable debate within the Islamic world
- other religious traditions responded to global modernity
  - e.g., Christian groups were concerned with the ethical issues of economic globalization
  - “liberation theology” (especially in Latin America) advocated Christian action in areas of social justice, poverty, human rights
  - growing movement of “socially engaged Buddhism” in Asia
- World Peace Summit (2000): more than 1,000 religious and spiritual leaders explored how to confront conflicts in the world
The World’s Environment and the Globalization of Environmentalism
The Global Environment Transformed

- Three factors have magnified the human impact on the earth:
  - World population quadrupled in the twentieth century.
  - Massive use of fossil fuels (coal in the nineteenth century, oil in the twentieth).
  - Enormous economic growth.

- Uneven spread of all three over the world:
  - But economic growth came to appear possible and desirable almost everywhere.
The Global Environment Transformed

- Human environmental disruptions are now of global proportions
  - Doubling of cropland and corresponding contraction of forests and grasslands
  - Numerous extinctions of plant and animal species
  - Air pollution in many major cities and rivers
  - Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) thinned the ozone layer
- By 2000, scientific consensus on the occurrence of “global warming” as the result of burning of fossil fuels and loss of trees
Green and Global

- Environmentalism began in the nineteenth century as a response to the Industrial Revolution but did not draw a mass following.
- Environmentalism only became a global phenomenon in the second half of the twentieth century.
  - Began in the West with Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962).
  - Impetus for action came from the grassroots and citizen protest.
  - In Germany, environmentalists entered politics as the Green Party.
Green and Global

- Environmentalism took root in developing countries in the 1970s–1980s
  - Tended to be more locally based, involving poorer people
  - More concerned with food security, health, and survival
  - More focused on saving threatened people, rather than plants and animals
  - Environmentalists sometimes have sought basic changes in political and social structure of their country (e.g., Philippine activism against foreign mining companies)

- Environmentalism became a matter of global concern by the end of the twentieth century
  - Legislation to control pollution in many countries
  - Encouragement for businesses to become “green”
  - Research on alternative energy sources
  - Conferences on global warming
  - International agreements on a number of issues
Green and Global

- sharp conflicts between the Global North and South
  - Northern efforts to control pollution and global warming could limit the South’s industrial development
  - developing countries perceive developed ones as unwilling to give up their advantages (e.g., U.S. refusal to ratify Kyoto protocol)
  - controversy over export of hazardous wastes by rich countries
- nonetheless, global environmentalism has come to symbolize focus on the plight of all humankind
  - challenges modernity itself, especially commitment to endless growth
  - growing importance of ideas of sustainability and restraint