20th Century Europe (HIST 3620)

OVERVIEW

This course encompasses the broad expanse of 20th Century European history, in all its social, political, economic, and cultural dynamism. For Eric Hobsbawm it was the ‘age of extremes’, while for Niall Ferguson – currently causing something of a stir lecturing Stateside – it was an ‘age of hatred’ (both of their books on the subject are essential reading). With two World Wars and numerous other conflicts, more people were indeed killed in Europe during this troubled century than in any other in human history. By 1945 much of the continent, especially in the centre and in the east, lay in ruins. Yet this downbeat assessment should not cloud the vitality and innovation of the age; its powerful social and cultural changes and achievements; its murky complexity and grand narratives. From the vantage point of London, a great European capital, we are able to look on this extremely turbulent era with both the proximity and distance necessary to appreciate its unique events and ongoing legacies.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students will be expected to be able to:

- Grasp the major themes and concepts associated with 20th century European History
- Develop a complex and nuanced view of a number of contentious themes and topics
- Understand the interconnectedness of history, politics and culture over the course of this era

ORGANIZATION

Teaching is a 1 x 3 hour seminar each **Wednesday at 1–4pm**. Twice during the term an excursion or trip to a museum or show will be planned (this is still in the process of being determined). Possible trips include: the Imperial War Museum, the Museum of London Docklands, the National Theatre on the South Bank, the National Film Theatre, and the Houses of Parliament. Classes may be switched around to accommodate this.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed three ways. Two essays, one in either half of the term, your contribution in class, and a presentation. Essentially you will be evaluated on the following:

- **Presentation** on one subject of the course, to be delivered in front of the class (the schedule will be arranged in the first, introductory tutorial) at around 10 minutes length. Everyone will do a presentation, and there may be two per week to ensure everyone contributes. I will give additional advice on this to you in the opening seminar – **Value: 10%**

- **Class contribution** – This will be assessed over the whole term. As you will be aware, attendance for all classes is **mandatory**. No-one should miss a class without a very
good reason (serious illness, family bereavement, etc). Registration will be taken every week. Anyone who cannot attend the class should inform myself, the office, and Dean John Harrington of Fordham University as soon as possible – Value: 10%
- An essay in the first part of the term. This will be a forerunner to the larger essay/exam assessment – Value: 30%
- A second coursework essay on any other of the term’s subjects – Value: 50%

GRADING SCALE:

A  Excellent; Honors-level Work, Outstanding
A – Still Excellent
B + Very Good; High Level of Performance
B  Good; Solid and Above Average Level of Performance
B – Good; Still Above Average
C + Average Level of Performance
C  Satisfactory; Acceptable Level of Performance
C – Minimally Acceptable
D  Passing, but Unsatisfactory; Below Average Performance
F  Failure, Inferior Performance

READING

Aim to consult all the required readings listed for each week’s topic, and also try to access and familiarize yourself with as many of the recommended readings as possible. Remember that the Required Readings are the minimum you should be looking at. This subject is vast, so do not be afraid to bring in any readings or material from outside the set resources (in fact this will normally enhance your understanding and lead to higher marks in the evaluation procedure). The required readings are basically a guide designed to equip you with the background to each week’s subjects. They are not the only things you need to read.

Three large, general histories of this era worth purchasing are:


If you have any questions or requests for further reading – especially if you are doing a presentation on a subject – please feel free to get in touch with me.
WEEKLY SEMINAR SCHEDULE

1.) 13 January –

- Introduction to the Course – what is expected of you; assessment; addressing syllabi
- A little about the tutor; meeting you – Name / Home town / Course / Institution
- Presentation scheduling for forthcoming weeks
- Any Questions

2.) 20 January – World War I

i.) First Student Presentation (10–15 mins)

- Allied Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia, Japan, Italy) vs Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire), and/or
- Causes

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered (45 mins + 15 mins questions)

iii.) Second Student Presentation (10–15 mins)

- Western Front trench warfare, and/or
- Combat on the Eastern Front; Naval War

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered (45 mins + 15 mins questions)

v.) Group-work discussion (30 mins):

- ‘To what extent was the First World War an imperial conflict?’
- Legacies and consequences (end of the Tsarist Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German and Ottoman Empires)

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:

- Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet On the Western Front (London, 1996 [1928]).
3.) 20 January – Peace Settlement

i.) First Student Presentation

- The terms and conditions of the November 11 Armistice, 1918, and/or
- The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the Treaty of Versailles

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered

iii.) Second Student Presentation

- The other Treaties of 1919: St. Germain, Trianon, Neuilly, and/or
- 1920 Treaties of Sèvres and Lausanne

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:

- ‘Was the Treaty of Versailles (1919) too harsh?’
- Legacies of the Peace Settlement – future problems?

Required Reading:

- Davies, *Europe*, 927–49.

Recommended Reading:


4.) 27 January – Postwar Problems and the Interwar Years

i.) First Student Presentation

- The German Weimar Republic (1919-30) – a time of democracy and cultural dynamism, but also unresolved political tension as a hangover from the Great War, and/or
- International Cooperation in the form of the Dawes Plan (1924), the Locarno Treaties (1925), and the Kellog-Briand Pact (1928)

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered
iii.) Second Student Presentation

- The Great Depression (triggered by the Wall Street Crash of 1929), and/or
- The Spanish Civil War (1936–9) – ideological polarization and aspects of the forerunning conflict

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:

- ‘Had Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929) lived and the Weimar Republic thrived, would peace in Europe have prevailed?’
- Assessments of the problematic ‘peace’, the success of the Treaties, and the rise of the extremes

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


5.) 3 February – Communism

i.) First Student Presentation

- The Russian Revolutions (February and October) of 1917, and/or
- The Menshevik/Bolshevik split; Leon Trotsky; the rise of Stalinism

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered

iii.) Second Student Presentation

- The New Economic Policy (NEP); The Five Year Plans, and/or
- Collectivization; the Great Purge; the annihilation of the Kulaks (Dekulakization)

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:
Dr Connal Parr – Spring 2016

• ‘Was the Soviet Union always a strictly communist society?’
• Communism in the rest of Europe – Germany, France, Italy and elsewhere

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**6.) 10 February – Fascism/Nazism**

i.) First Student Presentation

- Concept of ‘Social Darwinism’, racial superiority, a natural ‘Aryan race’ and eugenicist thought – outlined in Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (1924), and/or
- Classless struggle, attitudes to gender and religion

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered

iii.) Second Student Presentation

- Inside the Third Reich, and/or
- An extreme manifestation of far-Right politics – as a reaction to Communism

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:

- ‘Was Fascism and Nazism in German solely a response to the rise of Communism?’
- Benito Mussolini’s Fascist Italy and other ‘semi-fascistic’ regimes; General Francisco Franco in Spain and Doctor António Salazar in Portugal

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

- Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1933). See also numerous biographies of Hitler.

7.) 17 February – World War II

i.) First Student Presentation

- Causes and Actors (Allies vs Axis): outbreak of war September 1939; the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939), appeasement and containment, and/or
- Atrocities: the Holocaust; millions killed in Europe (especially Russia), and/or
- The advance of Nazi Germany, sweeping across the Russian steppes, Scandinavia, Czechoslovakia, mainland Europe, the blitzkrieg (lightning war), aerial and sea warfare (e.g. the Battle of Britain)

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered

iii.) Second Student Presentation

- Turning points: the entry of the United States; the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk; the partisans of Yugoslavia, and/or
- Normandy Landings of 1944; the march of the Red Army to Berlin; the subsequent unconditional surrender of Germany in 1945

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:

- ‘Were both the Allies and the Axis powers guilty of “war crimes”?’
- ‘To what extent was the Second World War caused by the policies of appeasement?’

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Troubled Sleep* (1949)

8.) 24 February – World War II – Site Visit (TBA)

9.) 2 March – Mid-Semester Break – No Class

10.) 9 March – International Cooperation and Reconstruction

i.) First Student Presentation

- The Nuremberg Trials (1945–6), *and/or*
- Establishment of the United Nations (October 1945); the Schuman Declaration of May 1950

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered

iii.) Second Student Presentation

- The birth and development of the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Union, *and/or*
- The perseverance and success of Christian Democratic parties in France, Germany and Italy under Charles de Gaulle, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide de Gasperi

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:

- ‘Did post-war international relations set the tone for a convincing European peace?’
- ‘De Gaulle, Adenauer and De Gasperi – the fathers of post-World War Two democracy in mainland Europe?’

**Required Reading:**

- Davies, *Europe*, pp. 1045–89.

**Recommended Reading:**


11.) **16 March – Cold War Part I**

i.) First Student Presentation

- Effect of the Cold War on international relations and the ‘capitalist’ world – the ‘Truman doctrine’ and the Marshall Plan, and/or
- Cold War battlegrounds and competition: the Greek Civil War, 1946–9; the 1948 general election in Italy; Communist coup in Czechoslovakia (February 1948); the establishment of West Germany and the Berlin Blockade (1948–9)

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered

iii.) Second Student Presentation

- The East: Soviet suppression of uprising and dissent in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968); the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–89); the imposition of martial law in Poland (1980–1), and/or
- Soviet international relations following the death of Stalin (1953); the tenures and ‘expansionist’ aims of Khruschev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko and Gromyko

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:

- ‘How ideologically concerted was the West’s Cold War campaign?’
- ‘Was the East engaged in its own internal Cold War? Consider the regime of Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia and other attempts at non-Stalinist forms of socialism’
- ‘Was the Soviet Union capable of international diplomacy and pragmatism?’

**Required Reading:**

- Davies, *Europe*, pp. 1109–1117.

**Recommended Reading:**


12.) 23 March – Cold War Site Excursion (TBA)

13.) 30 March – Collapse of Communism

i.) First Student Presentation

- Mikhail Gorbachev – The era of ‘Glasnost’ and the thawing of the Cold War, *and/or*
- The break-up of Yugoslavia (1991–2)

ii.) Seminar/lecture from me reflecting on areas not covered

iii.) Second Student Presentation

- The fall of the Berlin Wall, *and/or*
- The fragmentation of the Eastern bloc – Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia

iv.) Seminar/lecture from me looking at material not covered

v.) Group-work discussion:

- ‘Did the fall of the Berlin Wall represent “the end of history”? (Francis Fukuyama)
- Legacies: the rise of nationalism and the break-up of the Balkans

*Required Reading:*


*Recommended Reading:*

20th Century Europe (HIST 3620) – General Reading List


