

**HUMANITIES 2590**  
**The Making of the Modern World:**  
**Renaissance to the Present**

Spring 2018  
Wed. & Fri., 4:30–5:50pm  
Room 4619

**INSTRUCTOR**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course surveys the major ideas, political developments, and cultural movements in European societies from the Renaissance to the collapse of Communism, and beyond. It aims to provide undergraduate students with foundational and thematic knowledge of European history, as well as an understanding of the ways that European politics, culture, and economy have been shaped through encounters with non-European societies—through cultural and commercial exchange, imperialism and de-colonization, Cold War rivalries, and globalization. In the spring semester of 2018, the course emphasizes two macrohistorical questions: Why were European societies able to project economic and political power throughout the world between 1500 and 1900? How did the interaction between nations and empires structure European developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? The course is aimed at students from all backgrounds; no prior acquaintance with history is presupposed.

Intended learning outcomes include:

1. Grasp the major ideas, political developments, and cultural movements in European societies from the Renaissance to the present, as well as an understanding of the ways that European politics, culture, and economy have been shaped through encounters with non-European societies.
2. Acquire familiarity with some of the major interpretative paradigms and theories for explaining long-term change in European societies and their relationships to the rest of the world.
3. Learn to conceptualize historical change in a comparative and long-term framework, and not simply in terms of individual events, persons, and dates.

## ASSESSMENTS

Participation: 10%

- Attendance is mandatory and will be checked randomly at eight intervals during the course of the semester. For each absence without a legitimate excuse (e.g. illness, academic conflict, etc.), 1% of course grade will be subtracted. All students are required to meet with the course instructor after receiving their graded midterm paper. The purpose of the meeting is to review the comments and discuss strategies for improvement. Failure to attend this meeting will lead to a loss of 2%.

Midterm examination (conducted in class on March 21): 20%

- Multiple-choice questions, map questions, identification questions

Midterm paper (due April 6): 20%

- 7 pp. analytical paper based on assigned readings; topic announced in advance

Final paper (due May 15): 25%

- 7 pp. analytical paper based on assigned readings; topic announced in advance

Final examination (date TBA): 25%

- Multiple-choice questions, map questions, identifications

## ASSIGNED TEXTS

The textbook is available for purchase in the university bookstore and on 2hr reserve in the library: Joshua Cole and Carol Symes, *Western Civilizations: Their History & Their Culture*, Brief Fourth Edition (New York: Norton, 2017).

- The book can also be purchased in a digital version from the publisher's website: <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294991902>
- You should feel free to use an earlier edition (2nd or 3rd). There are no significant differences in content. However, please be aware that chapter 12 in the Fourth edition is equivalent to chapters 11 & 12 in the Second and Third editions.

All other assigned readings are available as PDFs on the course's Canvas website. You are encouraged to print them out and annotate them instead of viewing them on an electronic device.

Since the lectures are largely thematic and analytical, the textbook assignments are intended to provide orientation and background, and to serve as reference when you prepare for the exams and papers. To get the most out of lecture, it is recommended that you complete the textbook reading before the relevant lecture.

A section of each week's lecture will be devoted to discussion of the document reading, if assigned. The day on which it will be discussed is indicated on the syllabus. Please complete this reading before that date and be prepared to discuss it in class.

The internet is a wonderful resource; it contains an endless amount of information. Some of it is accurate. Much of it is dubious. A lot is plain wrong. Most of it will be *irrelevant* for the purposes of this class. Looking things up on the web can be at most a supplement to—but not a substitute for—completing the assigned readings. You are not expected to do any outside reading for either the exams or the papers.

## EXPECTATIONS

- If you are forced to miss an exam or paper deadline due to illness or other emergency, you must provide a doctor's note or equivalent; otherwise a make-up test or extension cannot be arranged. Without a legitimate excuse, late papers will be docked 5 points (out of a total 100) per day.
- Once the paper topics are announced, we will discuss proper practices for academic citation, quotation, and paraphrasing. Please be aware that this course enforces a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. If a student is found to have cheated on an exam or paper, the case will be referred to the head of the Humanities Division and potentially further up the chain of university administration.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Feb. 2: Introduction and overview

Feb. 7: Explorers and conquerors

Feb. 9: The revival of antiquity

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 12
- Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 1997), chaps. 3, 4, 18 [Feb. 7].

Feb. 14: Religious reformations

Feb. 16: No class

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 13

Feb. 21: War making and state building

Feb. 23: The old regime and its alternatives

- *Western Civilizations*, chaps. 14 & 15
- Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 16–72 [Feb. 21].

Feb. 28: Europe and the early modern world

Mar. 2: The scientific revolution

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 16
- Geoffrey Parker, "Europe and the Wider World, 1500–1750: The Military Balance," in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, ed. James D. Tracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 161–95 [Feb. 28].

Mar. 7: The Enlightenment

Mar. 9: French Revolutions

- *Western Civilizations*, chaps. 17 & 18
- T. C. W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?* 2nd ed. (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), 43–69 [Mar. 9].
- William Doyle, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chap. 5 [Mar. 9].

Mar. 14: Empires in Europe and overseas

Mar. 16: The great divergence

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 19
- Jack A. Goldstone, "The Rise of the West—or Not? A Revision to Socio-economic History," *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 2 (2000): 175–94 [Mar. 16].

Mar. 21: **Midterm exam**

Mar. 23: States and nations

- *Western Civilizations*, chaps. 20 & 21
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 5–46.

Mar. 28: Globalization and imperialism

Mar. 30: No class

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 22
- John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), chap. 6.

Apr. 4: No class

Apr. 6: Mass Politics and mass society (**Paper due**)

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 23
- Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage, 1987), chaps. 4 & 5.

Apr. 11: The First World War

Apr. 13: The graveyard of empires

- *Western Civilizations*, chaps. 24
- Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin, 2006), introduction [Apr. 13].

Apr. 18: Stalin's Revolution

Apr. 20: Fascism and National Socialism

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 25
- Michael Mann, "The Contradictions of Continuous Revolution," in *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, ed. Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 135–57 [Apr. 20].

Apr. 25: The collapse of the postwar settlement

Apr. 27: Nazi empire and genocide

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 26
- Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1999), chap. 5 [Apr. 27].

May 2: The Cold War and decolonization

May 4: Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Empire

- *Western Civilizations*, chaps. 27 & 28
- Fred Halliday, "A Singular Collapse: The Soviet Union, Market Pressure and Inter-State Competition," in *Debating Revolutions*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 275–295 [May 4].

May 9: European integration and disintegration

- *Western Civilizations*, chap. 29
- “Vladimir’s choice,” *The Economist*, 23 December 2017.

May 15: **Final paper due**