

# Humanities 2590

## The Making of the Modern World: Renaissance to the Present

Spring 2021

Mon. 4:30-5:20pm, Fri. 12:00-1:20pm

### **Instructor**

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Office hours by appointment

### **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 decolonization, Cold War rivalries, and globalization. The course readings explore the ways that political, social, technological, and economic developments affected Europeans' ability to project power, both within the borders of the modern state and beyond it, and considers the sources and limitations of that power. 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.

### **Special Remarks for Spring 2021**

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the university has decided to hold all courses online through Zoom until further notice. In spite of the change from our traditional format of face-to-face teaching, this course aims to give the same standard of education. Doing so will require your patience as well as your active participation: logging into class at the regular times, taking notes and asking questions, joining breakout sessions, and staying on top of the assigned readings. Once you become familiar with Zoom (and it doesn't take long), you'll notice that there are many advantages to conducting class online. I'm confident that we will all have a rewarding experience this semester.

## Assessments

### Attendance: 10%

- Live attendance at each class is mandatory, with the exception of excused absences. Your camera must be turned on for you to be credited as present. There are 20 class meetings after the end of add/drop period. Attendance will be checked at all of them. Perfect attendance will result in a 100% participation grade. One unexcused absence will result in a 95% participation grade, etc.

### Participation: 5%

- Students are encouraged to ask questions or make pertinent comments in the closing period of lectures.
- In addition, a substantial portion of seven class meetings marked with an asterisk (\*) will be devoted to class discussion. Students will be divided into groups of 5 or 6 members at the end of add/drop period, and will meet within these groups during breakout sessions. During these sessions, students will discuss a precirculated question related to the assigned reading. At the end of the session, each group should nominate one of its members to report their findings to the class. A different reporter should be chosen for each class meeting. This arrangement is designed to ensure that everyone speaks in front of the class at least once. Students who are not designated reporters are also always welcome to make comments and ask questions after breakout sessions.
- It is expected that each student in the course participates at least once, either by asking a question, making a comment, or serving as group reporter after a breakout session. Fulfilling this requirement results in a 100% participation grade. Failure to satisfy it results in a 0% participation grade.

### Midterm examination: 25% (**Mar. 19**)

- In-class, online examination lasting 1 hour and 20 minutes. The examination will be open book but internet browsing and communication among students are forbidden.
- Students will be asked to answer multiple-choice questions and complete a series of identification questions based on the lectures and assigned readings.
- Identification questions involve a list of several nouns: names/places/events/ideas etc. You will be asked to choose some number of them (e.g. 3 out of 5) to identify. Identifying means answering several questions that I will pose about the meaning or significance of each term. Specific examples will be discussed closer to the examination.

### Term paper: 30% (**due May 10**)

- Students must write an 8 pp. analytical paper (12 pt. Times New Roman, double spaced, 1 inch margins top/bottom/left/right) based on the assigned readings. This is not a research paper. Your paper will be evaluated on the basis of its ability to demonstrate mastery of the course content and advance a clear, cogent argument. The paper topic will be distributed well in advance of the deadline.

### Final examination: 30% (**date TBA**)

- Online examination lasting approx. 3 hrs. The examination will be open book but internet browsing and communication among students are forbidden.
- Students will be asked to answer multiple-choice questions and complete a series of identification questions based on the lectures and assigned readings.
- The final examination will cover the second half of the course.

### Assigned Texts

All assigned readings are available as PDFs on the course's Canvas website. 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 readings. You are not expected to do any outside reading for either the examinations or the papers, though I am always happy to recommend some.

### Office Hours

Students are strongly encouraged to meet with me to discuss questions about the course and its subject matter. Office hours will be held by appointment. If you have any questions about the course material, or would like further guidance in preparing for the paper or exams, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail. If you are feeling challenged by the special conditions of this semester, I am always happy to talk. We'll set up a convenient time to speak on Zoom.

### Deadlines and Academic Integrity

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 they are late. This course enforces a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. If a student is found to have cheated on an exam or committed plagiarism on a paper, the case will be immediately referred to the head of the Humanities Division for further investigation.

### Course Outline

Feb. 1: Introduction

Feb. 5: The age of exploration

#### Assigned Reading:

Friday:

- Daniel R. Headrick, *Power over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 11–27, 32–41, 96–118.

Feb. 8: The Renaissance

Feb. 12: **No class**

#### Assigned Reading:

Monday:

- Eugene F. Rice, Jr., and Anthony Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe 1460–1559*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1994), pp. 77–109.

Feb. 15: **No class**

Feb. 19: The military revolution\*

#### Assigned Reading:

Friday:

- Geoffrey Parker, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chapters 6, 7, 9.

Feb. 22: The Reformation

Feb. 26: The struggle for supremacy\*

Assigned Reading:

Friday:

- Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 31–72.

Mar. 1: Absolutism and its alternatives

Mar. 5: The Scientific Revolution

Assigned Reading:

Monday:

- Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 73–110.

Mar. 8: Europe and the early modern world\*

Mar. 12: The age of reason

Assigned Reading:

Monday:

- Headrick, *Power over Peoples*, pp. 59–88, 118–123, 139–158.

Mar. 15: Revolutionary Europe

Mar. 19: **Midterm examination**

Assigned Reading:

Monday:

- Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 111–139.

Mar. 22: The Industrial Revolution\*

Mar. 26: The age of ideologies

Assigned Reading:

Monday:

- Robert C. Allen, *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 1–83.

Mar. 29: Globalization and imperialism\*

Apr. 2: **No class**

Assigned Reading:

Monday:

- Headrick, *Power over Peoples*, pp. 177–179, 197–217, 226–37, 257–276, 289–292.

Apr. 5: **No class**

Apr. 9: The First World War

Assigned Reading:

Friday:

- Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 198–274.

Apr. 12: The Soviet experience

Apr. 16: The postwar settlement (part I)

Assigned Reading:

Monday and Friday:

- Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 275–333.

Apr. 19: National Socialism

Apr. 23: The Second World War\*

Assigned Reading:

Friday:

- Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: Norton, 1995), pp. 180–244.

Apr. 26: The postwar settlement (part II)

Apr. 30: The wonder years

Assigned Reading:

Monday and Friday:

- G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 159–219.

May 3: Decolonization\*

May 7: The collapse of Communism

Assigned Reading:

Monday:

- Headrick, *Power over Peoples*, pp. 334–373.