

Humanities 2590

The Making of the Modern World: Renaissance to the Present

Spring 2022
Mon. 4:30-5:50pm, Fri. 12:00-1:20pm

Instructor

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Office hours TBA

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 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.
4. Analyze and write persuasively about primary historical sources.

Assessments

1. 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.
2. Midterm examination: 25% (**Mar. 18**)
 - Closed-book, in-class examination lasting 1 hour and 20 minutes. (In the event that examinations are not allowed to proceed in person, the examination will be open book but internet browsing and communication among students will be forbidden.)
 - Students will be asked to answer multiple-choice questions and map questions, and complete a series of short essay questions based on the lectures and assigned readings.

3. Group presentation: 15% (**week of Apr. 4–11**)
 - Students will be divided into groups of 6. Between Apr. 4 and 11, groups will give short presentations to the instructor outside of class hours on one of two proposed topics.
 - Each student is expected to present for 5 minutes.
4. Paper: 25% (**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) in response to one of two proposed topics.
5. Final examination: 25% (**date TBA**)
 - Closed-book, in-class examination lasting approx. 3 hrs. (In the event that examinations are not allowed to proceed in person, the examination will be open book but internet browsing and communication among students will be forbidden.)
 - Students will be asked to answer multiple-choice questions and map questions, and complete a series of short essay questions based on the lectures and assigned readings.
 - The final examination will cover only the second half of the course.

Textbook

The assigned textbook for the course is: Judith Coffin, Robert Stacey, Joshua Cole, and Carol Symes, *Western Civilizations: Their History & Their Culture*, 17th ed., vol. 2 (New York: Norton, 2011). It is available as a PDF on the course's Canvas webpage. On average, around 40pp. of reading are assigned each week.

- The textbook readings are designed to provide orientation for students, especially those without prior knowledge of European history. The lectures presuppose that students have read the relevant textbook section and are familiar with its content, and strive to make general observations and draw deeper connections. You are strongly encouraged to read the assigned pages before class, otherwise the lectures may be challenging to follow. Completing the textbook reading doesn't mean fully understanding all of it the first time. The lectures will provide additional clarification, but they also contain much that will not be found in the textbook.

Presentation and Paper

The group presentation and paper require students to read and evaluate a set of primary source documents on a specified topic. All texts will be available as PDF packets on the course's Canvas webpage. The aim of the presentation and paper is to engage deeply with these sources, and to focus on understanding and analyzing them. No outside reading is required or expected.

Office Hours

Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor 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 the instructor via e-mail.

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.

Course Outline

Feb. 4: What are the aims and expectations of this course?

Feb. 7: Why did Europeans try to make contact with peoples on other continents?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 347–71.

Feb. 11: How did Europeans in the Renaissance innovate by looking to the past?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 373–97.

Feb. 14: Why did Western Christianity splinter into different churches?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 399–425.

Feb. 18: How did Europe's military advantage arise?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, chap. 14, pp. 427–37.

Feb. 21: How were society and politics organized in early modern Europe?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 437–49, 457–78.

Feb. 25: What were the origins of modern science?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 493–515.

Feb. 28: What explains success in great power politics—in Europe and overseas?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 478–91.

Mar. 4: What did it mean to be “enlightened”?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 517–43.

Mar. 7: What was the French Revolution all about?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 545–63.

Mar. 11: How did Napoleon reorganize Europe?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 563–77.

Mar. 14: Why did the Industrial Revolution begin in Britain?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 579–611.

Mar. 18: **Midterm examination**

Mar. 21: What are ideologies and why did they emerge when they did?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 613–41, 643–51, 661–66.

Mar. 25: How did globalization and mass politics change European society?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 711–24, 729–31.

Mar. 28: Why did European empires transform during the nineteenth century?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 679–709.

Apr. 1: Why did the First World War break out?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 747–69.

Apr. 4: How were the Bolsheviks able to gain control over Russia?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 731–34, 769–73, 784–86.

Apr. 8: Why was democracy so fragile in interwar Europe?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 773–81, 783–84, 793–99, 803–5.

Apr. 11: How did Stalin and Hitler rule?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 786–93, 799–803.

Apr. 15: **No class**

Apr. 18: **No class**

Apr. 22: Could Germany have won the Second World War?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 815–31, 841–49.

Apr. 25: What was the Holocaust and how could it have happened?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 831–41.

Apr. 29: What was the impact of the Cold War and decolonization on Europe?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 851–77.

May 2: **No class**

May 6: Why did Communism collapse in Europe?

- Reading: *Western Civilizations*, pp. 885–89, 895–915.