

# INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN HISTORY

HIST 110

FALL 2014

OLD MAIN 001

TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS, 3:00-4:30



If the judgment only followed the explanation, the reader could simply skip it. Unfortunately, the habit of passing judgments leads to a loss of taste for explanations.

- Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (1941-1942)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

How can chronic womanizing be related to a financial revolution, or innovations in theater to the political novelty and novel violence of the French Revolution? Why would new ideas about prison architecture and the objectives of punishment come up in a conversation about John Stuart Mill's classic tract *On Liberty*, or a Crystal Palace in London celebrating imperial economies in a discussion of the ranting of a Russian writer named Dostoevsky? Why would we talk about a controversial 1913 ballet in a conversation also addressing World War I and Freudian psychoanalysis? Can we gain a new angle of insight onto the ending of European colonialism by posing the question, "what is a woman?"

Welcome to the history of modern Europe! In this class, you acquire an overview of European history from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century through the late 20<sup>th</sup> through reading of primary sources in context. There is no textbook: I will provide the historical context in interactive lecture occupying about one quarter to one third of class time. The goal of the course is for you to be able to connect historical *ideas* and *experiences* to major events in political history and trends in social and economic history. In doing so, you will be prompted to think analytically but openly about the heritage of liberal democracy, and to seek to understand European history's atrocities (imperialism in Africa, the Stalinist Terror, the Holocaust) without simply dismissing them as crazy, evil, or otherwise fundamentally incomprehensible. In our discussions, we will try to think "beyond good and evil," examining some of our own assumptions and values concerning individualism, economic class, gender and sexuality, race, national identity, liberalism, and various interpretations of freedom. We will also grapple with questions such as, how has the idea of Europe changed throughout recent centuries? Are German *Kultur* and French *civilisation* really irreconcilable, or a false binary of the divisive nineteenth and twentieth centuries? What about liberal democracy and individual spiritual freedom? What does it mean to be civilized? Can "civilized" people draw a line between ethics and aesthetics? How do ideas about the nature of citizenship, authority, God, progress, art, individual identity, and truth change over time, and why?

While you will be reading a lot, you will find that most or all of it is intense and exciting, and relevant to being human in the world today. In this sense, the course is consistent with Mac's academic divisions in approaching History much more from a Humanities perspective: in fact, one of the topics of the class will be the invention of the Social Sciences starting in the nineteenth century. Our readings will range from political and philosophical tracts to autobiography, fiction, and drama, and we will be looking at/listening to selections of music, theater, and visual art in class. It is to be expected that some students will find reading works of political thought to be the best way to understand history, while others may get more out of performing a section of a play. This is perfectly okay: students are expected to contribute to the class discussion according to their own personalities and talents, and to challenge themselves to read, look, listen, and think in new ways.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course

- Introduces you to *topics* in the social, political, cultural, economic, intellectual, and environmental history of Europe from the Enlightenment to the beginning of the crumbling of male domination of women, and of European domination of non-Europe in the mid-twentieth century.
- Builds your *conceptual tools* for approaching and appreciating modern European texts and other cultural artifacts encountered in class and in future life. What kinds of questions do we as historians pose to different kinds of texts? What can (and can't) we learn about the times in which people lived and wrote from the way they formulate their ideas or their lives in writing? What do we learn about a time and place by the language in which people wrote of the world around them?
- Improves your *analytical techniques and argument-building skills* for positing conclusions about connections between ideas and historical context, and for defending these conclusions with evidence. In other words, the course introduces you to the practice of history. These skills will be modeled during class discussion, which is why class preparation and participation are so important. Two analytical papers will require you to demonstrate these skills through synthesis of ideas from multiple texts.

## **TEXTS FOR PURCHASE**

Recommended:

George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*  
Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*

Required:

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*  
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*  
José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*  
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*  
Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*

*All other readings will be available electronically*

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS and ASSESSMENT**

The course will be graded out of 1,000 points. Completion of all components of the course – including all three required informal response papers – is required to receive a course credit.

### **1.) Attendance and participation: 225 points**

The majority of class time will be spent in intensive discussion. It is therefore essential to complete the reading, underlining important passages and jotting down thoughts or questions, and to come to class and participate productively. Productive participation means not just answering my questions but also: posing your own questions; listening to your fellow students and responding to their comments and questions; having specific passages in the assigned reading underlined or highlighted in order to illustrate your points when you speak in large- and small-group discussions; and *bringing that assigned reading with you to class*. There will be opportunities for students with different personalities to participate in different ways.

I ask that you arrive on time to each class and refrain from consuming food or gum (beverages are fine). In addition to this, it is expected that each student will know and use the preferred names and gender pronouns of everybody in the class. This is essential for creating the community of civility that is part of a liberal arts learning environment...not to mention being indispensable for having a productive discussion about “civilization”! In addition, your mobile phone should be on silent (not vibrate) or switched off and out of sight during class. If you are using your computer or tablet for something other than class purposes, it is not only obvious, but it also keeps you from participating productively, thus affecting your grade. Punctuality and attendance will also have an impact on your grade. Even if you complete all assignments, you may have no more than three unexplained absences in order to pass the class.

### **2.) Two five-page papers: 200 points each**

You will have a choice of three paper topics that will require you to analyze two or more texts in a 2,250-word paper, and to use that analysis to make a *historical argument*. You will learn how to do this effectively through class discussions. These paper question options are included in this syllabus at the end, and further instructions and tips for the papers will be available no later than ten days before papers are due.

### **3.) Three informal response essays: 50 points each**

Over the course of the semester you must write two-page response pieces (750 words) on *three* readings of your choice. These response papers may include general reactions, address any confusion about the reading, and offer thoughts about how the text connects to other readings, discussions, and themes in the course. You should also offer one or two discussion questions for class. Papers should be posted to Google Docs no later than 9 p.m. of the *evening before* the text will be discussed in class, and everybody should check the discussion board and read fellow-students’ responses before coming to class. These will not be graded for composition or organization, but please write in complete sentences and paragraphs.

### **4.) Final exam: 225 points**

The final exam on December 15 will consist of: a short identification section; seven directed, topical questions of which you should answer five of your choice in a short paragraph; and an essay.

## **POLICIES and SUPPORT**

If you are struggling in the class, you should first consult me and/or one of your classmates. I am available in 20-minute appointment blocks on Wednesdays between 1:30 and 3:30, but you may also arrange to meet in my office or at Café Mac (I enjoy institutional dining) or the Grille on another day of the week. While it is important that you let me know if you feel you are struggling, you may wish to go directly to the [Macalester Academic Excellence \(MAX\) Center](#), located in Kagin Commons. The MAX Center has peer tutors available for students in all stages of their writing. Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. You may drop in or call 651-696-6121 during the day or 651-696-6193 in the evening to schedule an appointment.

Students with disabilities are protected from discrimination. To ensure accommodation in this and other classes, please work with Macalester's [Disability Services](#) office.

Learning what is entailed in maintaining academic integrity and abiding by the rules of scholarly inquiry are central to the college experience. This class will follow Macalester's [policies and procedures](#) for dealing with plagiarism or other breaches in academic integrity.

## **DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **September 2. Introduction**

### **September 4. Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century world**

*Letters of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu Written during Her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa* (1689-1762), Letters I, V, VII, IX, XI, XIV, XV, XVII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXIX, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXVIII, L, LIII

### **September 9. Being oneself in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe**

*The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova* (1725-1798), pp. 1-15, 105-122, 295-316, 390-403

### **September 11. A Social Contract**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762), Book I, Chapters 1-3 and 6-10 in Book II, Chapters 1 and 16-18 in Book III, and Chapters 1 and 7-9 in Book IV

### **September 16. Representation and revolution**

Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate?" (1789)

"Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" (1789)

Marie-Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman" (1791)

### **September 18. The French Revolution**

Maximilien Robespierre, "Report on the Principles of Political Morality" (1794)

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), pp. 428-445

### **September 23. Romanticism and reality**

In-class readings and media

### **September 25. Revolutions of 1848 and new politics and sciences**

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), Chapters I and II, Section I (A and B), and Section II in Chapter III

**September 30. Liberalism and its anxieties**

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859)

**October 2. Evolution rather than revolution**

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (1859), pp. 70-112

Herbert Spencer, "Progress: its Law and Cause" (1857)

**October 7. Truth? Part I**

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), Parts 1-15

**October 9. Truth? Part II**

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* (1864), pp. 3-41

\* Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor" (1880) – optional evening discussion at instructor's home with snacks, date TBD

**FIRST PAPER DUE BY EMAIL AT NOON ON OCTOBER 13**

**October 14. Nations**

Giuseppe Mazzini, "Duties to Country" (1840)

Maurice Barrès, "The Nancy Program" (1889)

Theodor Herzl, "The Jewish State" (1896)

*Read your choice of two out of three from among Mazzini, Barrès, and Herzl, and both of:*

Otto von Bismarck, "Speech on the Law for Workmen's Compensation" (15 March 1884)

Rosa Luxemburg, *Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions* (1903), pp. 520-538

\* Bring stapled hard copy of paper to class

**October 16. Imperialism through critical European eyes**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1903)

**October 21. Men and women; social class; evolution and revolution**

George Bernard Shaw, "Letter to Arthur Bingham Walkley" (1903)

In-class reading of "Don Juan in Hell" scene

**October 23. FALL BREAK**

**October 28. World War I, postwar civilization, and its discontents**

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930)

**October 30. The Russian Revolution and Civil War**

"Decree on the Procedure to be adopted in Commandeering Dwellings and Movable Property" (1918)

Excerpts from the diaries of Iurii Got'e and Alexis Babine (1917-1920), 69-73

"Instructions for Carrying out Verification of Party Documents and Purging the Party Membership" (15 June 1921)

**November 4. Mass culture across interwar Europe**

José Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses* (1930), Chapters 1-8 and 11-13

**November 6. The arts and mass politics**

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936)

Arnold Schoenberg, "Twelve-Tone Composition" (1923); "Opinion or Insight?" (1926)

Walter Gropius, "On the Bauhaus" (1923)

**November 11. The incarceration experience: the Soviets**

Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind* (1967), Chapters 1-15, 20, 27-31, 39, 43-46, 48

**November 13. World War II and the politics of “mystification”**

Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: a Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*, pp. 1-27, 32-37, 42-55, 58-61, 83-96, 113-115, 126-176

**November 18. The incarceration experience: the Nazis**

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (1946), Chapters 1-4, 7-10, 13, 17

**November 20. Postwar governance in Western Europe**

In-class readings and media

**November 25. Life under postwar socialism**

Joseph Brodsky, “Spoils of War” (~1986)

Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (1953), pp. 3-24 and 54-81

**November 27. THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**December 2. Liberation?**

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), pp. xix-xxxv, 53-81, 126-138, 679-715

Frantz Fanon, excerpts from “Algeria Unveiled” (1959)

**December 4. Sexuality and power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* vol. 1 (1976), pp. 36-50 and 133-160

U.K. Gay Liberation Front, “Manifesto” (1971)

**SECOND PAPER DUE BY EMAIL AT NOON ON DECEMBER 8**

**December 9. Aftermaths of colonialism and the Cold War; final discussion**

Milan Kundera, “The Grand March” in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984)

\* Bring stapled hard copy of paper to class

**FINAL EXAM ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1:30-3:30**



\* BOTH SETS OF PAPER PROMPTS PROVIDED HERE ARE INTENDED TO HELP YOU THINK ABOUT BIGGER IDEAS AND CONNECTIONS WHILE READING, AND TO UNDERLINE/HIGHLIGHT YOUR READINGS IN A WAY THAT PREPARES YOU FOR YOUR WRITING. THESE TOPICS ARE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGE, AND YOU ARE WELCOME TO PROPOSE ADDITIONAL ONES! \*

### **First Paper Question Options**

#### **Question #1 – Individual and Society**

During the eighteenth century, the Individual seemed to have triumphed, at least for elites. The nineteenth century, however, was characterized by a sharp tension between the ideals of individual freedom, on the one hand, and social harmony and unity on the other. What kinds of ties bound the individual to one's fellows in Casanova's time? What role did the relationship between the individual and the nation play in the ideas in currency during the French Revolution? What kind of individual/society dynamic did Dostoevsky or Nietzsche see as characteristic of nineteenth-century society? Write an account of changes that took place in ideas about the relationship between the individual and the social body (nation; society) in this 100-year span, connecting them to actual social/political/economic changes that we have discussed in class. Choose *two* writers to analyze in depth. You may use evidence from other readings to aid you in drawing contrasts, but be careful not to make your essay a survey of texts we have read – the focus should be on a careful reading and interpretation of two writers.

#### **Question #2 – Change and Progress**

Almost all of the writers we have read had ideas about the nature, direction and valence of historical change. How do the circumstances of time and place shape the views of the Abbé Sieyès, Edmund Burke, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche on whether or not change is progressive (i.e. towards something better)? How do understandings of the mechanism of that change differ in these writers, and what, in their respective historical contexts, might account for the differences? Choose *two* of these writers to analyze in depth in addressing the two preceding questions. You may refer to others to aid you in drawing contrasts. (See caveat for question #1.)

#### **Question #3 – Authority and Power**

Between the French Revolution and the end of the nineteenth century, new technologies of power and social control emerged in Europe. In almost all of the texts we have read, we can see either a celebration of power, or acute anxiety about its nature and use. What can we tell about historical change in the nineteenth century from the thoughts of the authors we have read on the subject of power and authority? You may choose your focus: the power of the state over the individual; the power of society or the nation over its members; ideas about the power of "nature" or natural law in shaping civilization; gender relations; the effects of an industrial economy on individuals or classes; or insights into how knowledge is produced and *truth* is asserted. Choose *three* texts to analyze, showing in what ways these authors may be reacting to the same changes in the world around them, and in what ways they are responding to different developments, or offering different interpretations of the same developments.

## **Second Paper Question Options**

### **Question #1 – Has civilization become “neurotic”?**

May we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization—possibly the whole of mankind—have become ‘neurotic’?

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 110

What does it mean, within the framework of psychoanalysis, to ask whether civilization has become “neurotic”? How useful do you find Freud’s mode of explaining the state of twentieth-century Europe? In your analysis and evaluation of Freud’s ideas, you should use concrete examples. You may wish to focus on the failure and collapse of the Third Republic in France or the rise of fascism in Europe, or you may draw on experiences of war, European imperialism in Africa, or the Holocaust. To make your argument about the applicability (or irrelevance) of “neurosis” to civilization, you should draw on the ideas of other writers we have read. Are others saying essentially the same thing? Or do other writers offer more appropriate categories for understanding the crisis in twentieth-century European society?

### **Question #2 – Did “rational man” undermine “his” own world?**

In passages by Thomas Mann discussed in class, he argues that people such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud attacked truth and reason not out of nihilism, but out of idealism. Do you agree with this distinction between nineteenth- and twentieth-century manifestations of irrationalism? According to Thomas Mann and José Ortega y Gasset, how has “mass man” appropriated and adulterated critiques of reason, and what consequences does this have for the social and political life of Europe? Is there a connection, as Mann implies, between rationality and morality? How are twentieth-century changes in gender and sexual politics related to this question of a rational world undermined by idealism? To make your argument, you may draw on as many texts as you like, as long as you contextualize (succinctly is fine) each one.

### **Question #3 – Bureaucracy and barbarism**

As the European nation-state matured and democratic political practice expanded in the nineteenth century, the structure of the state required more and more subdivision of administrative authority. Focusing on any combination of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz*, Eugenia Ginzburg’s *Into the Whirlwind*, and Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, explore the connections among: the technical efficiency required of modern governance (including self-governance); the question of individual responsibility for decisions; and how it happens that human beings come to treat their fellows as non-persons. Is this kind of organized, ordered “barbarism” something quintessentially modern, or is it atavistic? Does it spring from within “civilization” itself, or is it an aberration? Is it even possible to talk about European “civilization” without cringe quotes? Though your analysis should focus on two or three from among Conrad, Levi, Ginzburg, and Foucault, you may want to use the work of Sigmund Freud, George Bernard Shaw, José Ortega y Gasset, Marc Bloch or others in your discussion either of bureaucracy or of “modern” cruelty.