

## **Europe in the Twentieth Century**

History 237

Spring 2012

University of Massachusetts-Lowell

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays 12:30-2, and by appointment

Course Website: <http://continuinged.uml.edu/online>

### **Course Description**

For Europe, the twentieth century was one of unthinkable and even cataclysmic destruction, though also one of astonishing renewal. This class will survey the continent's history over this 'age of extremes', moving broadly from the apogee of European global power at the turn of the century to its decline in the trauma of two world wars and decolonization, through the Cold War and post-1945 recovery and the challenges and possibilities that have arisen for Europe in the aftermath of 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Specific topics will include imperialism, total war and genocide; the crisis of liberalism and the rise of radical left and right politics; artistic modernism and visual culture; consumer society and modernization in everyday life; movements of protest and liberation; post-colonial dilemmas of immigration and assimilation; and the ongoing process of European integration. This course aims at fostering an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the past, and so it will in particular incorporate critical consideration of visual evidence and memoir into class discussion and assignments.

### **Course Objectives**

The aim of the course is to enable students to:

- identify and discuss the main events and themes of twentieth century European history, and understand how they have shaped our contemporary world
- critically analyze a variety of historical evidence (primary sources, secondary texts, visual materials) and use it to make historical arguments in essays
- refine skills in interpreting visual culture (film, propaganda, advertising) and written memoir/fictional accounts, and assess their value as historical sources
- demonstrate measurable improvement in their writing

### **Course Texts**

The following are required texts for the course. They are available at the University bookstore, and should be purchased as soon as possible. All images shown in class will be housed on the course website, and I will provide any supplementary

readings directly in class or online. Films and film clips for the course will be available either on the course website or on reserve at the Media Center in O’Leary. Since much of the work of the course will consist of primary source analysis, students are required to bring the texts we are discussing (except for the Paxton textbook) to class.

Robert Paxton, *Europe in the Twentieth Century* (fifth edition, 2012)

Marvin Perry et. al., eds., *Sources of European History Since 1900* (second edition, 2011)

Richard Bessel, ed., *Life in the Third Reich* (2001)

Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (2003)

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (2005)

Azouz Begag, *Shantytown Kid* (2007)

### **Course Website**

The course website is at <http://continuinged.uml.edu/online>

The website employs the Blackboard Vista course management software, and it is an essential component of the course. All of the essential assignments, images and individual class outlines will be posted there. You should go to the web address as soon as possible, bookmark it, confirm your registration to obtain a user name and password, and log on.

\*See the handout “Blackboard Vista Access Information” for instructions on logging in.

Please contact me if you are having any difficulties whatsoever in accessing or using the course website.

### **Required Course Work**

The work of the course will break down as follows:

Unit One worksheet and paper 20%

Unit Two worksheet and paper 20%

Unit Three paper 20%

Unit Four paper 20%

Class Discussion 20%

Due dates for the assignments are provided below.

\*Please note: Late written work cannot be accepted without penalty unless arrangements are made with me in advance of the due date. Written work should also be submitted directly to me in hard copy format. The penalty for lateness is one-half letter grade per day. Missed or late assignments can have a dire effect on your grade, and you should contact me if there are any circumstances that make it difficult for you to complete a piece of work in timely fashion.

On class discussion:

My aim is that class discussion be a fully integrated part of the work we will be doing in the class, and that all students will participate in an active and informed way in those discussions. Each class will consist mainly of direct analysis and discussion of the reading. In addition, students will sign up at the beginning of the term to be “primary discussant” during two classes of their choosing over the course of the semester. Evaluation of these will be combined with a grade for daily participation, to produce an overall class discussion grade. Missing the class for which you are responsible, as well as lateness and/or incomplete preparation for the discussion will lower the participation grade, as will any more than three absences.

### **Schedule of Classes**

1/24 Course introduction

### **Unit One: Empire, Total War and Revolution, 1900-1919**

1/26 Apex and Anxiety: Europe at the Turn of the Century

Paxton, 3-36

Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899) at

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kipling.asp>

- in what sense was Europe “at zenith” at the beginning of the twentieth century, as Paxton’s chapter heading suggests?
- what, according to the chapter, were the main features of Europe’s social (p.8-20), political (p.20-30) and cultural (p.30-36) life at the beginning of the twentieth century?
- what, according to Kipling, is “the white man’s burden”?

1/31 Imperialism, Militarism and the Coming of World War

Paxton, 41-60

Perry, 18-26; 41-43

- how did turn of the century politicians and intellectuals justify imperialism, and how did imperialism contribute to the coming of world war?
- what is the “greatness of war”, according to the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke?
- what specific events led to the outbreak of world war in August 1914, and why wasn’t war avoided?

2/2 ‘Total War’, 1914-1917

Paxton, 63-79

Perry, 49-54

course website: image file, “World War I propaganda”

- why did the populations in Europe react so enthusiastically to the declarations of war in August 1914?

- what military strategies did the combatants in World War I adopt, and why? in what ways were they effective and/or ineffective?
- how was the war characterized within the government propaganda efforts of the different participating nations?

2/7 In-Class Group Discussions: Traumas of Modern War  
see separate assignment sheet  
**\*worksheet due**

2/9 Revolution and the Bolshevik Challenge  
Paxton, 107-120  
Perry, 95-101; 112-113  
course website: image file “early Bolshevik propaganda posters”

- how exactly did Lenin envision revolution in Russia in his pamphlet, “What is to be Done?”
- how did the Bolsheviks come to power and establish their new regime?
- what policies did the new Soviet regime adopt, and how did it represent itself and its policies through propaganda?
- what was the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution upon Europe as a whole?

## **Unit Two: Liberal Recovery and Crisis, 1919-1939**

2/14 Bitter Legacies of War: Versailles and the New Post-War Order  
Paxton, 141-159  
Perry, 77-82

- what were the main concerns weighing upon the architects of the Paris peace settlement?
- what were the main provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and how successful was the treaty in creating the conditions for an enduring peace?
- what was the impact of the war upon European consciousness, as revealed in the documents of Valéry, Remarque, von Salomon and Freud?

**\*Unit One Assignment due**

2/16 Interwar Culture: Wasteland or Brave New World?  
Paxton, 235-257  
course website: view film clips, Salvador Dali and Luis Bunuel, “Un Chien Andalou”, 1929, and Sergei Eisenstein, “Battleship Potemkin”, 1925

- what is “mass culture” and why was its development in the twenties historically important?

- how are “Un Chien Andalou” and “Battleship Potemkin” representative of the “experimental” nature of interwar high culture?

2/21 A ‘New Woman’? Gender Dilemmas of the 1920’s

Renate Bridenthal, “Something Old, Something New: Women Between the Two World Wars”, handout

Alexandra Kollontai, “Communism and the Family”, 1920, at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/works/1920/communism-family.htm>

course website: see image file, “The New Woman”

- what were the main changes and continuities in the lives of women during the 1920’s?
- what was the communist vision of the modern woman and family, as advanced by Alexandra Kollontai?
- how was the “new woman” depicted in art and in mass culture?

2/23 The Rise of Fascism

Paxton, 179-199

Perry, 138-40, 154-161

course website: preview images, “pre-1933 Nazi propaganda posters”

- what is fascism, and why did it become a viable political alternative in Europe in the 1920’s?
- what are the defining features of Mussolini’s and Hitler’s respective worldviews?
- how did fascist parties present themselves to the public in their propaganda efforts?

2/28 The Great Depression and the “Nazi Revolution” in Germany

Paxton, 261-288

Perry, 151-4; 161-2

Bessel, ed., *Life in the Third Reich*, 1-15, 41-55

course website, view film clip, Leni Riefenstahl, “Triumph of the Will”, 1935

- what caused the Great Depression, and how effectively did European governments deal with it?
- how did the unemployed experience the Depression, and what was its impact upon the population as a whole?
- how did Hitler and the Nazi Party establish a dictatorship in Germany?
- how did the Nazis address Germany’s economic problems?

3/1 Everyday Life under Fascism: Women and Youth

Bessel, ed., *Life in the Third Reich*, 25-40, 57-67

Claudia Koonz, “The ‘Woman Question’ in Authoritarian Regimes”, handout

course website: preview images, “post-1933 Nazi propaganda posters”  
**\*optional worksheet due**

3/6 Modernization and Terror in Stalin’s USSR, 1929-1939

Paxton, 288-293

Perry, 114-126

course website images: preview images, “Stalinist propaganda posters”

- what was Stalin’s vision for the Soviet economy, and how did he justify it?
- what was the impact of Stalin’s modernization campaign upon Soviet society and politics?
- how did the Soviet government use propaganda to support its modernization campaign and develop the image of Stalin?

3/8 Liberal Crisis, the Popular Front and the Coming of War

Paxton, 313-326

handout: Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Wall”, (1937)

- what was the “Popular Front”, what were its aims, and why did it fail?
- why was the Spanish Civil War seen by many at the time as an event of European and even world-wide importance?
- What is the main challenge with which the central character Pablo grapples in Sartre’s “The Wall”, and why might it be historically and philosophically important?

**\*Spring Break**

### **Unit Three: War, Genocide and Recovery, 1945-1968**

3/20 The Return of Total War: World War II

Paxton, 329-352

Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, Part One, pp. 15-60

- what specific diplomatic crises led to the outbreak of war in 1939?
- what aims drove fascist foreign policy maneuvers in the 1930’s, and why did those moves not encounter greater resistance?
- how did the Nazi takeover of Austria affect Ruth Kluger’s life as a child in Vienna?

**\*Unit Two Assignment due**

3/22 Hitler’s “New Order” in Europe

Paxton, 355-384

Perry, 233-238

- how did Hitler’s early victories create a “New Order” in Europe, and how did that new order function?

- what were the different forms taken by collaboration and resistance in Nazi-dominated Europe?
- how did resisters like Albert Camus and Hans and Sophie Scholl describe and justify their acts of resistance?

3/27 The Holocaust as Experience and Memory

Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, Parts Two and Three, 61-170

- how did the “Final Solution” come about?
- how does Ruth Kluger narrate and attempt to make sense of her experience of deportation and internment at Theresienstadt and Auschwitz? What sticks out most in her account?

3/29 Origins of Cold War Europe

Paxton, 409-422

Perry, 305-309

Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, Part Four, 171-214

- how did the United States and the Soviet Union go from being allies against fascism to enemies, and which if either in your view was the more responsible party?
- how did Western and Soviet leaders justify their adoption of Cold War stances?
- how did the Berlin Wall come about?

4/3 Finding Humanity in the Rubble: “The Bicycle Thief”

Paxton, 439-441; 479-481

\*in-class viewing of “The Bicycle Thief”, Vittorio De Sica (1948)

4/5 “The Bicycle Thief” and Postwar Culture

\*finish viewing of “The Bicycle Thief”, Vittorio De Sica (1948)

- how would you characterize the style of the film?
- what, if anything, is the larger significance of the main character Antonio’s struggles in “The Bicycle Thief”?
- is “The Bicycle Thief” in your view a political or non-political film?

4/10 Western Europe: Recovery, Consumer Society and “Americanization”

Paxton, 503-527

view film: Jean-Luc Godard, “Breathless” (1959) at

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=154265816642125228>

- what does it mean to say that the countries of Western Europe became “consumer societies” in the 1950’s and 1960’s?
- how would you characterize Jean-Luc Godard’s take on consumer society and American cultural influence in “Breathless”?

- how would you explain the emergence of new student, worker and feminist protest movements in the 1960's?

4/12 The Cold War Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc

Paxton, 447-464

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, 1-54

- why did political repression resume in the Soviet Union and in its eastern bloc after the victory in World War II?
- what policies governed the regimes of the eastern bloc, and how successful were those regimes in recovering from the war?

4/17 Survival and Dissent: Solzhenitsyn's Prison Memoir

Paxton, 465-475

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, 54-finish

- what was the "gulag", and how did it relate to other goals and policies of Soviet communism?
- How does the main character Ivan Denisovich Sukhov experience, adapt to and resist the environment of the gulag?

### **Unit Four: A "New Europe"? 1968-present**

4/19 Post-Colonial Europe and Immigration

Paxton, 481-487

Azouz Begag, *Shantytown Kid*, introduction and 1-91

- how did Great Britain and France relinquish their imperial possessions?
- what are the main challenges Azouz Begag faces as an immigrant living in France, and how does he cope with those?

4/24 European Recession, Anti-Immigrant Politics and the Return of the Radical Right

Paxton, 548-562; 581-589

Azouz Begag, *Shantytown Kid*, 91-199

Perry, 376-381

- what new problems afflicted European economies in the 1970's and 1980's, and how did governments respond to them?
- what is the "new right" that emerged in European politics in the 1980's, and what were its main concerns?
- why has immigration been such a volatile issue in recent European politics?

**\*Unit Three Paper due**

4/26 Communist Decay and Dissidence in Eastern Europe

Paxton, 613-640

Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" (1978), excerpts at

<http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/165havel.html>



- what were the successes and failures of east bloc communism over the decades following World War II?
- how did dissent express itself in the eastern bloc during the 1970's and 1980's?
- what is Vaclav Havel's critique of the communist system in Czechoslovakia, and how does he propose to resist it?

5/1 Communism's Fall and Aftermath

Paxton, 643-665

Perry, 437-445; 467-474

- what was "perestroika", and why did Mikhail Gorbachev see the need for it in the Soviet Union in the 1980's?
- how did the decline of communism in Yugoslavia give rise to genocidal ethnic violence?
- what have been the main struggles facing formerly communist nations in Eastern Europe, and how successful have they been in addressing those?

5/3 Ongoing Uncertainties of European and Global Integration

Paxton, 666-673

Perry, 457-461

- what have been the main rationales driving European integration?
- what changes have come with the European Union, and why has European integration been less than universally popular with citizenries?

**\*Final Paper or Examination**