

Humanities 2590

The Making of the Modern World: Renaissance to the Present

[Draft Syllabus]

Spring 2020
Mon. 3:00–4:20pm, Fri. 10:30–11:50am
Rm 6602

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 alternative answers to two macrohistorical questions: Why were European societies able to project economic and political power throughout the world between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries? What were the sources and limitations of this 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.

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 briefly with the course instructor to discuss their paper in progress. Failure to attend this meeting will lead to a loss of 5%.

Midterm examination (conducted in class on **Mar. 13**): 30%

- Multiple-choice questions, map questions, identification questions.

Paper (due on **Apr. 20**): 30%

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

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

- Multiple-choice questions, map questions, identification questions.

Assigned Texts

All 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.

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 exams or the papers.

Office hours are held by appointment. If you have any questions about the course material, or would like further guidance in preparing for the papers or exams, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail. We will arrange an appointment that is mutually convenient.

Expectations

The paper topic asks you to analyze and synthesize the readings to write an argumentative essay. Once the topic is announced, we will discuss proper practices for academic citation, quotation, and paraphrasing. You are not expected to do any outside reading for either the exams or the papers, which test your understanding of the assigned readings and your ability to interpret and synthesize them.

All examinations are closed book. 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.

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. Make-ups will not be arranged to accommodate travel or tourism. Without a legitimate excuse, late papers will be docked 5 points (out of a total 100) per day they are late.

Feb. 7: Explorers and conquerors

- Judith Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, 17th ed. (New York: Norton, 2011), pp. 347–371.

Feb. 10: Guns, germs, and steel

Feb. 14: The revival of antiquity

Assigned reading:

- Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 1997), chapters 3, 4, and 18.
- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 373–397.

Feb. 17: Religious reformations

Feb. 21: The Protestant ethic

Assigned reading:

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 399–446.
- Max Weber, *General Economic History* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950), pp. 275–78, 352–69.

Feb. 24: The military revolution

Feb. 28: The old regime and its alternatives

Assigned reading:

- Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, 1989), pp. 16–30.
- Coffin and Stacey, *Western Civilizations*, pp. 457–478.

Mar. 2: The Scientific Revolution

Mar. 6: The Enlightenment

Assigned reading:

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 493–541.
- Joel Mokyr, “The European Enlightenment and the Origins of Modern Economic Growth,” in *Reconceptualizing the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Jeff Horn et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), pp. 65–86.

Mar. 9: Europe and the early modern world

Mar. 13: **Midterm examination**

Assigned readings:

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 478–490.
- Daniel R. Headrick, *Power over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 139–58.
- Kenneth Pomeranz, “Without Coal? Colonies? Calculus? Counterfactuals and Industrialization in Europe and China,” in *Unmaking the West: “What-If?” Scenarios that Rewrite World History*, ed. Philip E. Tetlock, Richard Ned Lebow, and Geoffrey Parker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 241–276.

Mar. 16: Revolutionary Europe

Mar. 20: Empires in Europe and Abroad

Assigned reading:

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 545–577, 613–619.

Mar. 23: The industrial revolution

Mar. 27: The age of ideologies

Assigned reading:

- Coffin and Stacey, *Western Civilizations*, pp. 579–611, 619–641, 689–692.
- Headrick, *Power over Peoples*, pp. 177–79, 197–206.

Mar. 30: States and nations

Apr. 3: Globalization and imperialism

Assigned readings:

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 643–666, 679–688, 692–709.
- Headrick, *Power over Peoples*, 226–37, 257–76, 289–92.

Apr. 6: Politics in a new key

Apr. 10: **No class**

Assigned readings:

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 711–745.

Apr. 13: **No class**

Apr. 17: The First World War

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 747–781.

Apr. 20: The Soviet Experience (**Paper Due**)

Apr. 24: Fascism and National Socialism

Assigned readings:

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 783–822.

Apr. 27: The Second World War

May: 1: **No class**

- Coffin et al., *Western Civilizations*, pp. 822–849.
- Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London: Pimlico, 2006), chapter 6.

May 4: The Cold War and decolonization

May 8: The collapse of communism

- James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe* (Boston: Mariner, 2008), pp. xiii–xx, 147–227.