

Topics in European History

About the course

This course seeks to do several things: to help you gain basic knowledge about Europe history from the Congress of Vienna to the Cold War; to develop your skills in reading and analyzing primary sources; to provide the means to pose (and begin to answer) historical questions based on historical evidence; and to use what you have learned to make convincing historical argument about this period. It is a fast-paced course.

We are using John Merriman's classic textbook, *A History of Modern Europe*, Vol. II: *From the French Revolution to the Present* (Third Edition). That book ought to be available in the bookstore; at least two copies are on course reserve in the library. Most days, we will read one or two chapters of Merriman's book—and take quizzes on those chapters; in class, we will work with primary sources (available on the Moodle site for this course, <https://moodle.questu.ca>). In addition, we will spend some more focused time on two larger texts, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* and Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*. And we will study a film, a masterpiece of media manipulation, Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*.

Like most syllabi, this one is subject to revision.

The reading schedule will be posted separately.

Materials and texts:

REQUIRED

Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*. Touchstone, 1995. [On reserve in the Quest Library]

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. Translated by Samuel Moore. In Vol. One. *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, 98-137. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

(Other editions are available in the library.)

Merriman, John. *A History of Modern Europe*, Vol. 2: *From the French Revolution to the Present*, Third Edition. 3rd edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009. [On reserve in the Quest Library]

OPTIONAL / RECOMMENDED FOR BACKGROUND

Another very useful resource for those who wish to get a different perspective on the period is:

Davies, Norman. 1996 *Europe: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

This book is available through amazon.com as a Kindle book and through other ebook providers. It covers a much greater period of time, but the chapters that cover our period are well worth reading.

Assignments

The different kinds of assignments correspond to the various aims of this course. There are quizzes, short writing assignments, more developed (but still short) writing assignments, essays, and exams.

QUIZZES: BUILDING THE FACTUAL FOUNDATION

There will be frequent multiple-choice **quizzes**, which you will find on the Moodle course site. The point of the quizzes is to make sure that you have read in detail, that you have assimilated the information in the textbook, and that you can recall it. Some curiosities about the quizzes: they are pass-fail. They are mandatory: you must pass them to pass the course. You may use your book. You may, if necessary, retake them until you pass. The catch: the threshold for a pass is high: you are allowed one error. Any more than that, and you must retake the quiz. The quizzes will give you twenty (or

so) questions drawn randomly from a larger pool – so if you retake a quiz, you may not get the same set of questions. When you finish a quiz, you can review your answers. The quizzes can be challenging (and fun?). And they should mean that all of us have a common knowledge base before we get to class.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: READING, ANALYZING, AND WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

On most class days, we will spend time with **artifacts** (documents, objects, paintings, music) of the period that we are studying. We will work in small groups; our aim will be to pose questions about each artifact. You may be given more specific instructions on each day, but, in general, you should try to understand the significance and importance of each artifact. Some questions you should always ask:

- What kind of artifact is it?
- Who is its creator? (There may be more than one.)
- When was it created?
- Where was it created?
- Why is this artifact significant?

We will read closely and carefully, striving to understand the artifact in its own terms – and preparing to present our understanding and our analysis of each artifact to the rest of the class.

BRIEF ARTIFACT COMMENTARY (REQUIRED; UNGRADED): ANALYSIS

Before noon of the day following our class discussion, you will submit a **one-page commentary** on an artifact you discussed in class. This discussion will provide basic details about the artifact, and will explain (very briefly) why you think this artifact is interesting, relevant, illuminating, powerful, ambivalent... In short, you will provide a quick but intelligent discussion of the artifact. This written work is mandatory, but will not receive a grade. Instead, it is the foundation for a more developed piece of writing. (This piece must be submitted through Moodle)

SHORT ARTIFACT ESSAY (REQUIRED; GRADED): ANALYSIS, CONTEXTUALIZING, BASIC RESEARCH (10% EACH – TOTAL OF 30%)

Each week, you will choose one of the pieces you wrote that week. You will develop what you wrote, seeking out additional resources, fleshing out your discussion, and making it into a crisp **three-page discussion** (750 words or so – certainly no more than 1000, *not* counting footnotes and references). This discussion should place the artifact in context, explain its significance and interest, and point to at least four secondary sources that provide additional information or discussion.

ESSAY ON 1848: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS, ARGUMENTATION FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES – DUE TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, BY 10 PM. (20%)

The year 1848 is often seen as a turning point in European history. Using the range of your resources at your disposal – Marx, Tocqueville, the textbook, and any of the other sources we have used in this course – explain in what sense 1848 was (or was not) a turning point. You might consider how Marx and Tocqueville's analyses differ and what elements they have in common. You might think about the difference in tone between the *Manifesto* and the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. You might ask about the place of nationalism, class, liberalism, socialism, and conservatism. There is no "right" answer here: what you are really being asked to do is think, use evidence, and make an argument based on that evidence. Your essay should weigh in at **5-6 pages (1250-1500 words)**, not including citations. (We'll talk more about this in class.)

We will meet individually on September 14/15 to discuss the paper you handed in.

ESSAY ON PRIMO LEVI AND THE HOLOCAUST – DUE MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, BY 10 PM (25%)

Details on this assignment to follow. Your essay should weigh in at **5-6 pages (1250-1500 words)**, not including citations.

COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM (25%) – LAST DAY OF CLASS (TWO HOURS)

You will receive more details on this **exam** during the course. It will consist of several **short-answer questions and an in-class essay**.

Doing well in this course

Curiosity and initiative

Reading

Reading is a vital part of your education. *It is not a passive activity.* You will be expected to understand and assimilate the assigned material. You will be asked to master the material in a comprehensive and sophisticated way.

Ask yourself the following questions when you read or study a work:

- Who wrote or created it? (If you don't know, look him or her up.)
- When was it written or produced? (Ditto.)
- What does the work say?
- How is the work structured?
- What is the form of the work?
- What kinds of imagery does the work use?
- What questions is it attempting to answer?
- What is the author's argument? What are the argument's strengths and weaknesses?
- What kinds of evidence does the author provide for her or his argument? What kinds of sources does the author use?
- To what kinds of arguments is the author responding?

Pay careful attention to the clues the author gives you:

- Read (and decipher) the title. What does it tell you about the piece you are reading?
- If the piece is a book, read the introduction and conclusion of the book; if the piece is an article or a chapter, read the first and last paragraphs. These should help you figure out what the piece's argument is. Ask yourself what the thesis of the piece is.
- Read the entire work (or all of the assigned portions). Try to decide which parts or passages are most important. If you own the work, make notes in the margins next to important or interesting parts. (Do not do this in library books!)
- Write down your responses to the work in a journal. Think of note-taking as a way of organizing your thoughts. You need not write down everything; instead, jot down notes about interesting ideas, problems in the argument, or surprising aspects of the piece.
- Re-read the work. You will find that a second (and often, a third and fourth) reading greatly improve your understanding.
- Finally, summarize the author's argument in a few lines. If you can complete a sentence beginning "The author of this book/article argues..." you have read intelligently and productively.

If you do all this, you should be ready for *classroom discussion*.

Writing

The heart of history as a discipline is the written word. Historians must be able not only to read carefully but write clearly. In other words, they must be able to understand and use words precisely. Sloppy expression — in writing and in discussion — is as big a problem in the history as getting formulae wrong is in chemistry; sloppy expression results in papers that fizzle out rather than illuminate.

You may consult your tutor if you have specific questions; we also urge all students to make use of the Learning Commons and Peer Tutors.

Writing well requires at least three things: *content, expression, and structure*.

Content: You need to have read carefully (and, it should go without saying, taken notes) before you begin to write. You must *think* about what you have read. You must *understand the question* you are asked to answer. And, of course, you must have something to say. All of this will give your paper *content*.

You must supply *evidence* in the form of (properly-cited) quotations. That evidence will, in the main, come from the assigned readings for this course. If you use evidence from elsewhere, you must be sure that the evidence is *reliable*. (Please do not think that Wikipedia, sources drawn haphazardly from the web, or other sketchy sources will help persuade your reader of the merits of your work!)

Expression: *How* you say things is crucial. If your writing obscures your meaning, then it is impossible for your reader to evaluate the content of your paper. Style matters: it makes your content accessible and your ideas intelligible.

Papers for this course must be written in formal, standard English. You must:

- punctuate properly;
- use proper grammar;
- make appropriate word choices.

If you are not certain of a word's precise meaning, look it up in a good dictionary before handing in your paper. (If you don't yet own a good dictionary, get one.)

Structure: Good papers will have a crisp **introduction**. This introduction will let readers know the topic or subject of the paper *and* will let readers what *problem* that the paper aims to discuss. (This is the *thesis statement*.) The introduction should let readers what the limits of the discussion will be.

Good papers will have a solid **conclusion**. A conclusion is not just a summary of what has been discussed before: it emphasizes the importance of the thesis statement, provides the essay with a sense of completeness (it *concludes* the thoughts of the essay), and leaves the reader with a final sense of what the paper is about. (The conclusion should answer the dreaded "so what?" question — it should give the reader a sense of why s/he read it.)

Good papers will be built around solidly-constructed **paragraphs**. Paragraphs are the building blocks of good writing: they are built around one thought or idea.

Moving from paragraph to paragraph also requires good **transitions**. Transitions connect the ideas in an essay, and allow the reader to understand the flow of your ideas.

Overall: It takes time and effort to write well. Good writing, you will scarcely need to be reminded, is *re-writing*. Plan to write at least two drafts before you submit an essay. And ask for help: ask your peers to read your drafts *critically* and *unsparingly*; get advice from the Learning Commons; and raise questions in class.

Course policies

Your tutor expects you to:

- Have read the syllabus and all handouts and therefore be aware of policies, homework, and due dates.
- Check Moodle and your Quest email account frequently; changes to the syllabus and to homework assignments will be posted there.
- Attend every class.
- Arrive on time.
- Be prepared.
- Make use of the tutor's office hours.
- Obtain notes and handouts in the event of an absence.
- Have a completed rough draft in hand on writing workshop days.
- Turn in assignments at the beginning of class on the due date given in the syllabus.

Please:

- Be courteous.
- Turn off your cell phone before class.

- Help keep the classroom neat and tidy.

Please do not:

- Bring food into the classroom. (Beverages are ok; library rules apply for the academic building. If you are not familiar with those rules, it's time to go to the library and ask.)
- Use laptops, iPads, electronic tablets, netbooks, smart phones, stupid phones, Wii controllers, Gameboys, or other devices in class for non-class related purposes.

If you have a disability for which you seek accommodation, please let the tutor know. If you have a physical disability, please consult the Dean of Student Affairs; if you have a learning disability, please consult the Director of the Learning Commons.

Communicating with the tutor

Email is a good and useful tool. Please remember, though, that you should treat email to your tutor as a formal means of communication, one that demands courtesy and respect: you must use proper salutations, forms of address, punctuation, grammar, and syntax. Good writing begins with everyday practices.

I check my email regularly. Do not, however, expect immediate replies, especially to late-night or weekend emails.

Absences

There are — infrequently — valid reasons to miss class: illness, family emergencies, war, famine, pestilence, and so forth. If you have a really good reason for missing class, your case will be stronger if you notify your tutor *before* you miss class. You are in any event responsible for obtaining notes, handouts, and assignments. Missing class without a valid excuse may result in an “F.”

You must complete all assignments.

Failure to hand in all assignments will result in an “F” for the course.

Academic integrity

As the Quest University Calendar notes, “Quest is committed to the principle of academic integrity, itself grounded in the fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all academic work.” We depend on the honesty and responsibility of all of our members — scholars and teachers alike.

In keeping with the Quest Honour Principle, you will do your own work, and you will conscientiously and meticulously credit sources. Citing sources is not optional in academic work — it is a fundamental principle. As you should know, plagiarism is, broadly speaking, passing off someone else work or ideas as your own, failing to properly identify and credit the source of material you submit, or using cited material improperly. Please be aware that failure to observe the rules of citation will result in charges of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.

Charges of plagiarism or of academic dishonesty are not taken lightly, and may have dire consequences: failure on the assignment, failure of the course, and worse. To avoid this sort of unpleasantness, please be sure to read “University Policies: Quest Honour Principle and Protocol” in the University Calendar. If you have questions about citation, crediting sources, or anything else relating to academic integrity, please ask before you turn in the work. (Information about plagiarism can also be obtained from the Learning Commons.)

If the principle of citation is the same across academic disciplines, the particular format of citation varies from discipline to discipline, and even within disciplines. The practice in this course will be to use the Chicago style.

Reading Schedule

Readings other than Merriam, Marx, Tocqueville and Levi are not included here; they will be specified in class.

Tuesday, Sep. 6: Chapter 14 The Industrial Revolution

Wednesday, Sep. 7: Chapter 15: Liberal Challenges to Restoration Europe

Thursday, Sep. 8: Chapter 16 The Revolutions of 1848; Chapter 17 The Era of National Unification

Friday, Sep. 9: Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*; Marx, excerpts from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*; Tocqueville, excerpts from *Recollections*

Monday, Sep. 12: Chapter 18 The Dominant Powers in the Age of Liberalism: Parliamentary Britain, Tsarist Russia, and Republican France

Tuesday, Sep. 13: Chapter 19 Rapid Industrialization and its Challenges, 1870–1914 (note that your 1848 paper is due at 10 pm tonight)

Wednesday, Sep. 14: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Thursday, Sep. 15: Chapter 20 Political and Cultural Responses to a Rapidly Changing World

Friday, Sep. 16: Chapter 21 The Age of European Imperialism

Monday, Sep. 19: Chapter 22: The Great War

Tuesday, Sep. 20: Chapter 23: Revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union

Wednesday, Sep. 21: Chapter 24: The Elusive Search for Stability in the 1920s; Chapter 25, The Europe of Economic Depression and Dictatorship

Thursday, Sep. 22: Chapter 25: World War II

Friday, Sep. 23: Primo Levi

Monday, Sep. 26: Chapter 26: Rebuilding Divided Europe

Tuesday, Sep. 27: Chapter 27: The Cold War and the End of European Empires