

# Topics in European History

2018-2019, Fall Block 1  
Monday-Friday, 1 pm-4 pm  
Classroom: A.339  
Tutor: André Lambelet  
Email: [ajl@questu.ca](mailto:ajl@questu.ca)  
Office hours: TBA



Rundgemälde von Europa im August MDCCCXLIX.

Figure 1 F. Schroeder, *Rundgemaelde von Europa im August MDCCCXLIX*, Düsseldorf, Germany, 1849.

## About the course

It is no exaggeration to say that Europe dominated the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its politics, technology, economy, and military left an imprint on the world with which we are still struggling to come to terms. Europe's ideas shaped the modern world—and, to an extent we don't always recognize, made *us*—even if we are not ourselves European.

This course seeks to help you gain basic knowledge about Europe history from the Congress of Vienna to the Cold War; develop your skills in reading and analyzing primary sources; provide the means to pose (and begin to answer) historical questions based on historical evidence; and use what you have learned to make convincing historical argument about this period. The course is demanding and fast-paced. The reading load is heavy and sometimes dense. But the rewards of keeping up are great.

## Books and readings

---

Two required books for this course are available for purchase in the QUC bookstore:

Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Touchstone, 1995.

Merriman, John. *A History of Modern Europe: From the French Revolution to the Present*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.

Merriman provides the vital background for much of the discussion we will have in the course. The other written sources for the course are available on Moodle. Please PRINT the documents, and bring the printed documents to class. (That is not optional, except in the case of the *Communist Manifesto*; doing so is part of the cost of the course—and is far cheaper than buying a published collection of primary sources. (You may want to invest in three-ring binder so that you can keep your documents together.)

We will also watch two films as part of the course: Fritz Lang's silent masterpiece, *Metropolis* (Thursday, September 13, 7 pm in the media room) and Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (Monday, September 17, 6 pm, also in the media room).

## Format

---

The course consists of a mix of lectures, group discussion, and whole-class discussion.

Typically, I lecture on a topic at the end of class. That lecture sets the stage for the primary resources you read for the following day. At the beginning of each session, we will meet as a class. We then divide into groups, where we discuss the day's primary readings, seek to distill what we have read, and begin to work our daily group paper. (More on that below.) We then gather as a class again, where we collectively address the issues raised by the groups. And then another lecture... and so on, until we come to the end of history.

---

## Assignments

The assignments for this course aim to do several things: to ensure that you have the background knowledge necessary to make historical arguments; to immerse you in the ideas and expressions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical actors; to encourage you to write clearly and concisely about complex subjects; to identify and trace themes across an historical period; and to give you the tools to make robust historical judgments.

## Reading

---

Your first assignment is to *read*. Obvious, but crucial. More on this later.

## Fifty-word summary

---

Once a week, you must write a fifty-word summary of one of the primary sources you have been assigned. (You should negotiate with your group so that at least one member of your group writes a summary every day.) This is *hard*.

## Group work

---

After each seminar, each group must write up a one-page (academically formatted) summary of the day's reading. That summary should reflect the major issues that the readings raised, and should seek to situate

the readings in their historical context. One aim of the exercise is to challenge you to synthesize what you have read and discussed; another is to provide a starting point for individual essays.

This assignment is *required*, but not *graded*; it must be submitted on Moodle by 10 pm on the day of the seminar. I will return these to your group the next day with (very) brief comments.

### Weekly rewrite / week's argument

---

You must write three short papers (750 words or so; certainly no more than 1000 words, not counting footnotes or bibliography) for the course. They are due Saturdays at 10 pm.

At least one of the three must be a revision and extension of a one-page paper your group produced in the preceding week. It should be a critical analysis of one or more documents, and should situate that (or those) documents in a broader historical context. You have a great deal of latitude here—but your essay must be grounded and precise.

At least one of the three must be an essay that explores a theme that you think is of crucial importance for the week. The aim here is to provide a very concise historical analysis that reaches *across* our seminar discussions.

You will of course end up writing one of one kind and two of another. How you order that is up to you.

### Final essay

---

You have a final paper due at noon on the last day of the class. Although this is a take-home assignment, it functions in the way that an exam would do: that is to say, it is meant to get you to think comprehensively about the course, and to think thematically about European history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

While this is a take-home assignment, it is very much an “essay”: you are not required to come up with a *definitive* answer. There is no single “right” answer to the questions you will be asked to address—but the best essays will:

- draw on a range of evidence (textbook, lectures, primary readings, and, optionally and where appropriate, outside sources)
- discuss that evidence carefully, and
- draw informed conclusions about that evidence.

You must synthesize, come up with your own assessment of evidence, and draw sound conclusions.

If there is no single definite right answer, there *are* wrong answers: those that misstate, misrepresent, or ignore relevant evidence, or those that draw tendentious or unsupported conclusions from the evidence. So please find evidence, think carefully about that evidence, and write wisely about that evidence.

You will receive a set of prompts by the end of the first week.

### Quizzes (P/F)

---

One last bit of assessment: multiple choice quizzes based on Merriman’s text.

This is a “hurdle” requirement: if you do not pass the quizzes, you won’t pass the course. And you have to get 90% on all of your quizzes to pass. Simple as that.

Well. Sort of. The trick to the multiple-choice quizzes is that you can take them as many times as you wish; when you reach 90%, you may stop. (You might, however, press on—getting 100% on quizzes like this is oddly satisfying. And there’s no penalty for trying: the system records your highest grade.)

The point here is to make sure that you have the names, dates, places, and other “stuff” that makes up the vocabulary of history.

The quizzes are due on Mondays by noon.