The Great War and Its Consequences: one hundred years later

M.A. Course, 2 Credits, Fall 2014
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Classes:
Office Hours:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an introduction to the Great War and its consequences, to the relationship between national tensions and international conflict in Europe from the beginning of the First World War and the end of the Second.

When that war began, all the powers expected a short war, with a few incisive campaigns followed by a negotiation that would confirm the military results, presumably in an enjoyable aristocratic get-together like the Congress of Vienna a hundred years earlier. But the war lasted more than four years, and the zeal felt for it in all the belligerent nations, working classes included, soon evaporated — especially in Central and Eastern Europe. The scarcity of everything, and the vile conditions of the war, were the background to the revolutions of 1917 in Russia, which first toppled the tsarist regime, then put the Bolsheviks in power. This was the sharpest change produced by the war, at whose end only the British and French empires were left standing. The others, along with the armies, bureaucracies and landowners that sustained them, were gone.

The social dislocation consequent upon the First World War intensified such tensions and pushed the international system to heating point. Faced by the existence of Communist Russia, the Western Powers attempted to reconstruct their political and economic systems in such a way as to build defences against the Left. The emergence of fascism as an extreme form of such defences had important consequences for the international relations between states, as did the social and economic crisis of the democratic Powers in the 1930s. The course also examines the most important
developments of the period 1914-1945, including the impact of the War, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, the breakdown of democracy, the decline of liberalism and the appeal of dictatorship.

Readings:

A huge body of literature exists on the large and important themes that we shall pursue in the course.

The following readings are specially recommended:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The course is intended to be general in nature. The course is organised into lectures and seminars. Typically the first meeting of the week is a lecture, while the second is a seminar. Regular participation in discussions is necessary and expected. Students are required to read the items marked with an asterisk (*) under each week topic. There will be a final writing assignment (ca. 7-page) to compare the views of two modern authors. The students should be able to elaborate a thesis/argument and support it with evidence taken from the texts. Please note that class attendance is required.

GRADING:
The final paper will weight 50 percent of the grade. The remaining 50 percent will be assigned for presentations (30 percent) and class participation (20 percent).

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THEIR ASSESSMENT

The overall grade will primarily indicate the ability of the students to comprehend the principal events and historical processes that have helped to shape the history of Europe in the Twentieth Century. They will also be introduced, through the study of political, social and economic background in individual nation states, to a conceptual understanding of the determinants of International relations.

The learning outcomes of the course are supported and measured by the present course in the following ways: The ability to deploy effective oral presentation and discussion skills is assessed through the seminars. The skills to analyze historical events and evaluate them in a comparative perspective are reflected by the final paper. The discussions and final paper will also measured the ability of students to elaborate a critical review of the most recent socio-historical research and debates concerning the history of Europe between the Wars.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 0: Course description, content and works of relevance to the course.

Week 1

Session 1: Europe against Europe, 1914-1945: a panoramic view

Readings:
Session 2: Seminar (Discussion) The Origins of the First World War
Readings:
* - MACMILLAN, Margaret, “Introduction: War or Peace?” (pp. XXI-XXXV) and “Turning out the Lights: Europe’s last week of Peace” (pp. 599-631), in The War That Ended Peace. The Road To 1914, Random House, London, 2013.

Week 2
Session 1: The Great War and Its Impact: Revolution and the Rise of Communism
Readings:
* - OVERY, R.J., “Revolution and Counter-revolution”, in The Inter-War Crisis 1919-1939, pp. 12-23

Session 2: Seminar (Discussion) The Great War and its impact: Versailles and Peacemaking: the Historical Debate
Readings:


*- VINEN, Richard, “The Legacy of the War”, in *A History in Fragments. Europe in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 81-91

**Week 3**

**Session 1: Fascism: A Comparative Perspective**

Readings:

  --- *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The ‘Fascist’Style of Rule*, Routledge, 1995.
  --- *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, Edward Arnold, Lodon, 1989

**Session 2: Seminar (Discussion) Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives**

Readings:


**Week 4**

**Session 1: The Spanish Civil War and Franco’s Dictatorship**
Readings:


Session 2: Seminar (Discussion) The Europe of Dictators

Readings:

-LUEBBERT, Gregory M., “Narrowing the Aliberal Outcomes: Liberalism’s Final Failure and the Irrelevance of Traditional Dictatorship”, in Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy. Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe, pp. 234-266
*-MANN, Michael, “Explaining the Rise of Interwar Authoritarianism and Fascism”, in Fascists, pp. 31-91
-PAYNE, Stanley, A history of fascism, 1914-45, Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

Week 5

Session 1 and Session 2: Seminar (Discussion) The Second World War and Its Impact: Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide

Readings:


**Week 6**

**Session 1: Postwars: A Comparative Perspective**

**Readings**

**Session 2: Wars, Nations and Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe (General Discussion):**

**Readings:**

**Conclusions.**