Europe in the Age of Extremes: the 20th Century

Professor Thomas Kühne

Time: Tues and Thurs, 10:25-11:40 am
Office Hours: Tues 12:30-1:30 pm, Jeff 316; Thurs 12:30-1:30 pm, Cohen-Lasry House
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Description:
This course serves as an introduction into the political, social and cultural history of Europe and its paradoxes in the “Age of Extremes” (E. Hobsbawm) from the beginning to the end of the 20th Century. The survey is concerned with World War I and World War II and with the nature of postwar stabilization and recovery. It focuses on the rise of dictatorships and the radicalization of mass violence during the first half of the century as well as on the developments toward democracy, peace and civil society since 1950 in the various regions of Europe. The course will conclude with an evaluation of the remaking of Eastern and Western Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, the return of war and genocide to Europe and of present debates on the future of Europe.

Objectives:
The purpose of this course is to teach students a core history, which will allow them to judge events in this part of the world. It will provide an overview of the multi-faceted and paradoxical developments that formed the 20th history of Europe, and thus enable students to understand why mass violence and peace as well as dictatorship and democracy were often close together.

Required Books:
- Bonnie G. Smith, Europe in the Contemporary World. 1900 to the Present. A Narrative History with Documents (Boston & New York, 2007)

A reading packet with all other required texts is to be purchased in the History Dept, Jefferson, 3rd fl. ($20, only cash, no checks, no credit cards.)
Grading and Practical Arrangements

A maximum of 100 points can be achieved with:
- 25 points for the first in-class exam
- 25 points for the second in-class exam
- 10 points for three quizzes (5 points each, only the two best count)
- 20 points for the book review (see below)
- 10 points for the response paper on Kovaly
- 10 points for regular class attendance, continuous input in class discussion, and regular attendance at the reading sessions

100-96 points=A, 95-91 points=A-, 90-86 points=B+, 85-81=B, 80-76 points=B-, etc.

Each of the exams consists of six questions out of which five are to be answered during class time (75 minutes). The exams address general issues, developments and key terms; if you take care of the reading assignments and participate actively in class, you will face no problems with the exams.

The quizzes are short multiple-choice tests covering the previous three weeks of class and are to be taken within 5 minutes at the beginning of the class. There will be no make-up chance for quizzes. (You can miss or fail one without negative impact.)

The book review evaluates one book thoroughly on four to five pages double spaced; see the suggestions at the end of this syllabus, which include recent, outstanding scholarly books on 20th century European history. The review summarizes the book, analyzes its major arguments, its sources and puts it into a broader scholarly or intellectual context. It is highly recommended to search for already published reviews and to consult further literature. The book review is due on Nov 12 in class; late papers are penalized by a deduction of three points per late day.

The response paper elaborates on one aspect that caught your attention when reading the book of Kovaly; the paper is due Oct 22 in class; late papers are penalized by a deduction of three points per late day.

You are supposed to attend class as well as reading sessions regularly. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet. One or two absences of class will not inflict your grade. Further absences without convincing documentation (for example, an original, signed doctor’s note stipulating the nature of the sickness) will result in a deduction of two points each.

All readings are to be completed on the day assigned, before you come to class. Please bring both the readings and the notes you take from the readings to class to be able to follow and participate in class discussions.

Although the course focuses on 20th century European history, it serves to introduce students more generally to techniques of historical scholarship as well as practices of academic communication. The required readings are carefully chosen, but none of them should be mistaken as comprising a final truth. Thus, try to understand the basic assumptions, the main arguments, and the limitations of any text you read. Critique is the oil of knowledge. In class, feel invited to speak up and to articulate your thoughts and ideas, even if they do not comply with those of your classmates or the professor.
Checking emails on a regular basis and staying connected with friends and the rest of the world is important. Do not do it in class, though. Laptops, cell phones, iPods, gameboys, DVD players and other electronic devices are inclined to distract you or others from lectures and discussions. They are to be switched off during class.

The in-class exams address general issues, developments and key terms; if you take care of the reading assignments and participate actively in class, you will easily cope with the exams. The first exam covers weeks 1-6, the second covers weeks 7-14. Each exam consists of six questions; five have to be answered on about half a page.

Course outline

1st week: Time and Space, 1900-2000

Sept 1: What is the “Age of Extremes”?  
Opening Discussion

Sept 3: What is Europe?  

2nd week: World War I

Sept 8: Mass Death and Revolution
Reading: Smith, 128-156, 174-180.

Sept 10: Peace Treaties and Civil Wars
Reading: Smith, 156-161, 186-197.

3rd week: The Roaring Twenties

Sept 15: Democracy and Reconciliation
Reading: Smith, 197-206, 239-247.

Sept 17: Youth Cult and Fascism in Italy

4th week: Totalitarianism

Sept 22: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Nation
Reading: Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent. Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York, 1999), chapter 3. (Quiz 1.)

Sept 24: **Stalin’s Soviet Union**  

5th week: **Nazi Germany**

Sept 29: **Hitler’s Germany**  

Oct 1: **The Genocidal Morality**  
*Reading:* excerpts from Heinrich Himmler’s Speech to SS-Generals in Posen/Poznan, 4 October 1943.

6th week: **The Holocaust**

Oct 6: **Hitler’s Europe**  
*Reading:* Smith, 284-294, 320-367.

Oct 8: **First In-Class Exam**

7th week: **Introduction into Research Tools**

Oct 15: **LIBRARY SESSION** (MANDATORY)  
Class meets at 10:25 pm at the reference desk of Goddard Library. Other than usually, you are invited to bring your own laptop, if you have one.

8th week: **Cold War, 1949-1949**

Oct 20: **Total War into Cold War**  

Oct 22: **Nazi Terror into Communist Terror**  
Response paper due.
9th week: Prosperity, 1949-1973

Oct 27: Communist Europe
Reading: Mazower, chapter 8.

Oct 29: Capitalist Europe
Reading: Smith, 444-461, 466-474, 487-493.

10th week: Post-Imperialism: 1945 to now

Nov 3: Decolonization and Immigration
Reading: Smith, 498-529, 540-548. (Quiz 2.)

Nov 5: Muslims in Europe today

11th week: Democratization: the 1970s

Nov 10: Revolts and Revolutions
Reading: Smith, 555-590.

Nov 12: Spain, Portugal and Greece
Book review due.

12th week: Thatcherism and Perestroika: the 1980s

Nov 17: The Challenge of the Welfare State
Reading: Smith, pp. 618-628, 653-656. (Quiz 3.)

Nov 19: The Collapse of Communism

13th week: The End of an Era, 1990

Nov 24: “Goodbye Lenin” – the German Reunification
Movie to be watched and discussed in class.
14th week: War and Peace: the 1990s

Dec 1: The Return of Genocide in Yugoslavia

Dec 3: The European Union
Reading: Smith, pp. 678-711.

15th week: Exam and Conclusion

Dec 8: Second In-Class Exam

Dec 10: Conclusion

Suggestions for the book review:

The following books are on reserve in Goddard and available for purchase in online and other bookstores for less than $20 each, in particular if you consider buying a used copy.

- Marion Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany (New York, 1998)
- Richard F. Kuisel, Seducing the French. The Dilemma of Americanization (Berkeley, 1993)
- Trica Danielle Keaton, Muslim Girls and the Other France. Race, Identity Politics & Social Exclusion (Bloomington, 2006)


Oct 1: Excerpts from Heinrich Himmler’s Speech to SS-Generals in Posen/Poznan, 4 October 1943.


