

**History 200/History 600: Modern European Political Novels**  
**Fall 2013, 5257 Humanities, Tuesdays 1:20-3:20**  
**Instructor: Prof. Koshar**  
**4101 Humanities; Office hours: Thursdays 2-3:45 & by appt.**  
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**Rationale:** The course introduces students to some of the most important political fiction in modern European history. Historians often write of twentieth-century European history as an "age of extremes" shaped by political conflict, war, and genocide. How did fiction writers respond to this history? How did the violence and instability of everyday reality leave traces in literary sources? What contribution do novels make to our understanding of the past? Focusing on interactions between historical contexts and literary texts, the course consists of weekly readings, discussion, lecture, and writing. Among the works we consider are classics of European political fiction as well as lesser-known works. Our ambit is wide, including French, German, Italian, Albanian, and Romanian novels.

**Skills:** In addition to exploring an important strand of twentieth-century European culture, this course aims to strengthen students' critical skills through writing and discussion. It gives students the opportunity to make finely grained analyses of relationships between literary works as primary documents and larger historical milieus. It offers students a chance to "think on their feet" in seminar discussion as they sharpen their skills of oral presentation and debate. Because writing is so important to the way historians work—history is in many respects as "literary" as literature itself—students will have an opportunity to complete both short essays and a longer research paper. As with all history courses, History 200/600 aims to strengthen skills that travel well not only across academic disciplines but also across the various "life-worlds" we inhabit as public citizens and private individuals.

**Structure:** The course combines two curricular "streams": a History 200 and a History 600. Assignments and grading will reflect the course's dual structure. All students will read the same texts and participate in common seminar discussions. There will be overlap in some of the shorter essay assignments, but requirements for the longer research exercise will be attuned to students' class standing and academic background knowledge. This structure provides opportunities for a cross-fertilization of ideas and perspectives between introductory/intermediate students and more advanced undergraduates. Though prior knowledge of twentieth-century European history will be useful, it is not required for this course. Students will get some of that necessary background from the Hobsbawm text, class lectures, and optional supplementary reading.

**Grading and assignments:**

**History 200:** Students will be graded on two essays of three pages each and a ten-page (minimum) research paper. The shorter essays will together account for roughly 40% of the total grade; the research paper about 40%. (A one-paragraph "purpose statement" is required as part of the research-paper grade.) In addition, 20% of your grade will be determined by participation in seminar discussion and presentations as a "lead discussant."

**History 600:** Students will be graded on one essay of four pages and a sixteen-page (minimum) research paper. The shorter essay will be roughly 20% of the total grade; the research paper about 55%. (A one-paragraph “purpose statement” is required as part of the research-paper grade.) In addition, 25% of your grade will be determined by participation in seminar discussion and presentations as a “lead discussant.”

These percentages are approximate. The instructor may weight them differently in final grading based on factors such as student improvement during the semester or a student’s unusually high-quality contributions to seminar discussion.

See due dates for writing assignments, discussion, and reading in the course schedule below. More information on writing assignments and opportunities for library research will be available early in the semester. Students are strongly urged to avail themselves of the Writing Center, which includes information on proper formatting of essays and research papers as well as many other resources for the successful undergraduate writer. Follow this link: <http://www.writing.wisc.edu>.

### **Required Reading:**

All books are available on reserve at College Library Reserve. In addition, students can purchase the books at University Bookstore on State Street. Students must complete the required reading by the dates they are listed.

Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The History of the World, 1914-1991* (1994)

Heinrich Mann, *The Man of Straw* (1918)

Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (1916)

Hans Fallada, *Little Man, What Now?* (1932)

Ignazio Silone, *Bread and Wine* (1936)

Heinrich Böll, *The Train Was on Time* (1949)

Ismail Kadare, *The General of the Dead Army* (1963)

Herta Müller, *The Appointment* (1997)

### **Optional Background Reading on College Library Reserve:**

William W. Hagen, *German History in Modern Times: Four Lives of the Nation*

Irving Howe, *Politics & The Novel*

Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*

Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*

John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe, Vol. 2: From the French Revolution to the Present*

Brian Moloney, *Italian Novels of Peasant Crisis 1930-1950*

Peter Morgan, *Ismail Kadare: The Writer and the Dictatorship 1957-1990*

Joseph Rothschild and Nancy Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*

Stuart A. Scheingold, *The Political Novel: Re-Imagining the Twentieth Century*

Bernard Wasserstein, *Barbarism and Civilization: A History of Europe in Our Time*

Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995).

- 9/ 3 Course Intro
- 9/10 Lecture: Wilhelmine Germany's 'Place in the Sun'  
Reading & Discussion: Hobsbawm, pgs. 1-17, ch. 1-2
- 9/ 17 **Reading & Discussion: Mann, *Man of Straw***
- 9/24 Lecture: World War I  
Reading & Discussion: Hobsbawm, ch. 3-5
- 10/1 **Reading & Discussion: Barbusse, *Under Fire***
- 10/8 Lecture: Weimar Republic  
Reading & Discussion: Hobsbawm, ch. 6-7  
**First essay due (200 & 600)**
- 10/15 **Reading & Discussion: Fallada, *Little Man What Now?***
- 10/22 Lecture: Fascism  
Reading & Discussion: Hobsbawm, ch. 8-9
- 10/29 **Reading & Discussion: Silone, *Bread and Wine***
- 11/ 5 Lecture: Postwar Europe  
Reading & Discussion: Hobsbawm, ch. 10-11  
**Second Essay due (200)**
- 11/12 **Reading & Discussion: Böll, *The Train Was on Time***
- 11/19 Lecture: Communism in Eastern Europe  
Reading & Discussion: Hobsbawm, ch. 12-13  
**One-paragraph Purpose Statement Due**
- 11/26 **Reading & Discussion: Kadare, *The General of the Dead Army***
- 11/28-12/1 Thanksgiving Recess
- 12/3 **Reading & Discussion: Müller, *The Appointment***
- 12/10 No Class: Work on Final Projects
- 12/16 Research Papers Due (200 & 600)**