

History 514: European Cultural History Since 1870

Spring 2012, 1651 Humanities, TR 2:30-3:45

Instructor: Dr. Koshar (rjkoshar@wisc.edu)

Office hours: 4101 Humanities, TR 4-5 & by appt.

An erudite scholar once said that the twentieth century began with the death of God and ended with the death of Man. To discuss the meaning and validity of that statement is the goal of this course, an advanced undergraduate survey of European culture, society, and ideas since 1870. We pursue a number of themes, including the changing nature of selfhood; changes in religious thought; relationships between “elite” and “popular” culture; and the transformation of social and political thought.

Course assignments include: **five in-class discussions** (more details on this in lecture); **three essays of no more than five double-spaced pages each**; an in-class **midterm**; and an in-class cumulative **final**. Papers submitted after the due date will lose two points for each day they are tardy. Except in cases of dire personal crisis, severe illness, or the end of the world (which makes it all moot), makeup exams will not be given.

It is impossible to grasp the complexity of modern European cultural history without attending lectures. Attendance is not required but it is noted. Students must stay abreast of the required reading to understand lectures fully and to participate in discussions. Grading is as follows: 15 points each for the three essays (45 points total); 15 points for discussion; 20 points for midterm; 20 points for the final. The instructor reserves the right to “weight” some assignments differently, e.g., improvement over the course of the semester may result in more emphasis being put on the final paper and/or final exam when determining the cumulative grade, or a really brilliant discussion grade might offset a mediocre midterm grade. On the basis of 100 total points, grades are determined as follows: A= 100-93; AB=92-88; B=87-83; BC=82-78; C=77-70; D=69-60.

Graduate students taking the course for credit will substitute a research paper of roughly 20-25 pages for the three shorter papers. Their grade will be determined as follows: midterm and final, 20 points each (40 total); research paper, 60 points. They may attend the discussions but not participate.

Required Reading

Peter Watson, *The Modern Mind* (Perennial)

P. Fritzsche, ed., *Nietzsche and the Death of God* (Bedford/St. Martin's)

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Norton)

Ignazio Silone, *Bread and Wine* (Signet Classics)

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (Vintage)

Slavenka Drakulić, *A Guided Tour through the Museum of Communism* (Penguin)

Course Schedule and Lecture Topics

Part One: Death of God

- 1/24 Course Basics
1/26 Nineteenth-Century Contexts
Reading: Watson, chs. 1-4
- 1/31 Nietzsche: From the Nineteenth, Into the Twentieth Century
2/2 Max Weber's Iron Cage
Reading: Nietzsche, entire
- 2/7 **Discussion of Nietzsche**
2/9 Hedonists Without Heart? Popular Culture Before World War I
Reading: Watson, chs. 5-10

Part II: Man Against Man

- 2/14 Futurism, or Why Filippo Marinetti Loved War and Technology
2/14 **Essay #1 due**
2/16 War, or Why Ernst Jünger Loved the Future
Reading: Watson, chs. 11-13
- 2/21 Käthe Kollwitz and the Culture of Mourning
2/23 Karl Barth: Death of God Revisited?
Reading: Watson, chs. 14-17
- 2/28 Vienna, Freud, and Culture's Discontents
3/1 Taking 'Mass Culture' Seriously: Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin
Reading: Watson, chs. 18-21
- 3/6 Josephine Baker, the Banana Dance, and Popular Culture
3/8 **Discussion of Freud**
Reading: Freud, entire
- 3/13 **Midterm**
3/15 Carl Schmitt and the Political Theologies of Interwar Europe
Reading: Watson, chs. 21-23
- 3/20 Fascism and National Socialism
3/22 The Catholic Novel and Ignazio Silone's Last Supper
Reading: Watson, chs. 24-29
- 3/27 Anti-Fascist Resistance and Religion
3/29 **Discussion of Silone**
Reading: Silone, entire

3/31-4/8 Spring Recess

Part III: Death of Man?

4/10 George Orwell's Animals

4/12 Is Life Worth Living? Existentialism

4/12 **Essay #2 Due**

Reading: Watson, chs. 30-31

4/17 Existence and the Question of German Guilt

4/19 **Discussion of Camus**

Reading: Camus, "Myth of Sisyphus"; Watson, chs. 32-33

4/24 Lennon, Lenin, and the Triumph of Hedonism in the 1960s

4/26 The Rise and Fall of Communism

Reading: Watson, chs. 34-40

5/1 Michel Foucault's Imprisoned Self

5/3 **Discussion of Drakulić**

Reading: Drakulić, entire

5/8 What Happens Once Everything is Deconstructed? Death of Man?

5/10 Conclusion and Review

5/10 **Essay #3 Due**

Reading: Watson, chs. 41-42 and Conclusion

5/18 **Final Exam, 5:05-7:05 pm**