The Making of the Contemporary World, 1900-2000

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Course description
This an introductory undergraduate-level course on contemporary history, aimed at non-specialist students of history. It is a wide-ranging comparative course that explores important themes, concepts and theories relevant for the study of the 20th century. The course will examine theories of imperialism as well as the emergence of nation states, as empires collapsed. It will also turn to the challenge to liberal democracy posed by totalitarian regimes, which first emerged in interwar Europe. This will be followed by a discussion of genocide, the emergence of total warfare and the challenges of post-war reconstruction. Finally, the course examines the place of the nation-state in an era of global capitalism, as well as broader issues of minority rights and migration. The course presupposes a basic knowledge of contemporary history and familiarity with contemporary politics, as well as proficiency in English, which is the language of instruction.

Aims
Students are expected to attain a broad understanding of the critical developments in contemporary history since the turn of the century, and of the main historical and theoretical debates about them. Students will analyse key themes such as war and peace, democracy and totalitarianism, the rise of fascism, the collapse of communism in Europe, globalisation. By the end of the course, students will be expected to be able to identify the nature and scope of the issues raised concerning contemporary history; summarise and appraise the relative merits and demerits of alternative views and interpretations about contemporary political, social, and cultural history; present, accurately, succinctly and lucidly, and in written or oral form their arguments in accordance with appropriate scholarly conventions in assessed essays and unseen examinations.

Teaching methodology
The course will be taught through a combination of lectures and seminars. Lectures will cover the core of the course, exposing students to the main events of the period and their principal historiographical interpretations. During seminars students will focus on some specific issues to be discussed in class through primary and secondary sources, questions, and short presentations. Active participation in both lectures and seminars is an essential requirement for the course. All students on the course are expected to engage in discussion about the topic of the lecture or seminar, and to be ready to answer questions about it.
Assessment
A written examination at the end of the course counts for 40% of the total grade. The exam will be composed of a first section with several compulsory short questions, and a second section with essay-type longer questions, of which you are required to choose at least two.
Coursework counts for 30% of the total grade. Students are required to write two 2,000-word (excluding footnotes and bibliography) essays answering two questions chosen from a list that will be released at the start of the course (each essay counts for 15% of the final grade).
The remaining 30% of the grade for the course is calculated taking into account each student’s contribution to class discussion (15%) as well as the student’s performance in at least one short oral presentation on a topic of his/her choice during one of the seminars (15%).

Core readings
The key textbooks for the course are:


Course structure and reading list
The course is divided in 10 lectures that closely follow the chronology of the twentieth century. Moreover, there are 10 thematic seminars, during which student explore more in detail one broad topic. There are also 6 special seminars, in which students deliver short presentations answering specific questions related to one or more topics.

For each topic there is a set of ‘core reading’, which MUST be done before each seminar. The ‘further reading’ broaden and deepen the discussion of specific issues and themes. Students should familiarise themselves with several of them before each seminar, and they are expected to cite them in essays and presentations. *Relying on the basic readings alone will not be enough to pass the course.*

Lectures

1. *Introductory session*

2. *Democracy’s Rise and Fall*
3. Empires, nations, minorities
4. Race and gender between the wars
5. The crisis of Capitalism
6. War and genocide
7. Peace and reconstruction
8. Communism and Cold War
9. The rise of the welfare state
10. The crisis of the welfare state
11. The end of Communism and the rise of globalisation
12. Revision session

Seminars

1. Modern History and Historiography

Core reading

Further reading

2. The State

Core reading
M. Van Creveld, *Rise and Decline of the State* (1999), chapter 4
Further Reading
M. Van Creveld, *Rise and Decline of the State* (1999)

3. Empires and Imperialism

Core reading
W. J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism* (1983), ch. 1

Further reading
Sloan Mahone and Megan Vaughan, eds *Psychiatry and Empire* (2007).
Roy MacLeod and Milton Lewis, eds., *Disease, Medicine, and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion* (1989).
4. Nationalism and Nation-making

**Core reading**
Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*, chapter 2 (“The Origins of Chinese Nationalism”, pp. 37-78). [If you have time, the introductory section (pp. 1-36) is also strongly recommended.]

E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), ch. 7

**Further reading**
E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (1996), introduction
L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism* (1992)
S. Woolf (ed.), *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the present. A reader* (1996)
Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983)
C. Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms* (1990)
B. Voglis, ‘In search of a convenient past: Nationalism, violence and historical writing in 20th-century Europe’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40 (2005), 381-388
G. Bernardini, ‘The origins and development of racial anti-semitism in Fascist Italy’, *Journal of Modern History*, 49 (Sept. 1977), 431-453 (E)
J. Breuilly (ed.), *The state of Germany* (1992)
Jonathan Unger ed., *Chinese Nationalism*
5. War

Core reading
E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes* (1994), chapter 1
A. Beevor, *Stalingrad* (1999), chapter 10

Further reading
M. Van Creveld, 'Thoughts on Military History', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983), pp. 549-566
J. Winter et al. (eds), *The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (2001)

6. Genocide

Core Reading

Further Reading
M. Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State* (2005), vols. 1 & 2
M. Mazower, ‘Violence and the State in the Twentieth century’, *The American Historical Review* 107 (2002), Nr. 4

### 7. Reconstruction

**Core Reading**


**Further Reading**

8. Minorities and migration

Core reading

Further reading
S. Castles & M. Miller, Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World (2003), introduction & chapter one
S. Bose, A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in an Age of Global Empire, chapter 3.
P. Gatrell, A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during the First World War (1999)
J. & L. Lucassen (eds), Migration, Migration History, History (1999)
L. Lucassen, The Immigrant Threat: The Integration of Old and New Migrants in Western Europe since 1850 (2005)
M. Marrus, The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War (1985)
S. Sassen, Guests and Aliens (1999), chapter 5
C. Skran, Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime (1995)
T.Y. Tan & G. Kudaisya, The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia (2001), Chapters 5-6

9. Communism and its fall

Core reading

Further reading
A. Brown, Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective (2007)
T. Garton Ash, *We the People* (1990)
A. Yurchak, *Everything was Forever Until it Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (2005)

10. Globalisation

**Core reading**


**Further reading**

A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (1986)
J. Brewer & F. Trentmann (eds), *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (2006)