History 891: Proseminar in Modern European History

This course focuses on key themes and recent scholarship in twentieth century European history. We will examine classic problems (such as the Great War) as well as more recent historiographical approaches.

Requirements: Two short (5-7 pages) review essays and one long paper (15-20 pages) on a topic to be agreed upon with the instructor. If possible one of your review essays should assess a foreign language book. Longer papers should be in a field/country outside your specialty (i.e., if your specialty is modern Italy you will be urged to write about another country or to write a comparative essay). Students will also be responsible for leading two or more discussions. Attendance is essential.

Starred books can be purchased at the bookstore of your choice. All books are on 3 hour reserve in Helen C. White Library. Articles are available online via the UW Library.

Week 1. January 22. Introduction

Week 2. January 29. Napoleon

*David Bell, The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It (Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 1-20; 154-317.


Week 3. February 5. The Napoleonic Myth

Sudhir Hazareesingh, The Legend of Napoleon (Granta, 2005), 1-14; 40-99; 123-50; 184-233; 260-268

Sudhir Hazareesingh, The Saint-Napoleon (Harvard, 2004), 220-235

*Alain Corbin, The Village of Cannibals: Rage and Murder in France, 1870 (Harvard, 1992)

Week 4. February 12. 1848 Revolutions
*Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851* (Cambridge UP, 1994), 105-259


Dieter Dowe et al., *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform* (Berghahn books, 2001), 25-54, 916-935


Week 5. February 19. **Central and Eastern Europe in the Nineteenth Century**


Week 6. February 26. **Italy and the Southern Question**


Week 7. March 5. **Nationalism**


Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, new ed 2009),


Ernest Renan, “What is a nation?” in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny,
Becoming National: A Reader (Oxford, 1996), 42-55. [You can also read the French original entitled “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” available in multiple editions in Memorial Library]

Week 8. March 12. Empire


Week 10. March 26. The Great War


*Stéphane Audoin Rouzeau and Annette Becker, 14-18. Understanding the Great War (Hill and Wang, 2002), 1-69, 94-171

Week 11. April 2. Spring Break

Week 12. April 9. Nazism


*Peter Fritzsche, Life and Death in the Third Reich (Harvard UP, 2008), 1-224.

Week 13. April 16. Modern Dictatorships

* Richard Overy, The Dictators: Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia (Penguin, 2004), pp. xxxi-xl; 54-217; 540-651


David D. Roberts, “‘Political Religion’ and the Totalitarian Departures of Inter-war Europe: On the Uses and Disadvantages of an Analytical Category,” Contemporary European History 18, 4 (2009), pp. 381–414

Week 14. April 23. Consumerism


Week 15. April 30. European Union


Week 15. May 7. Islam
