

History 514: European Culture, 1870 to Present
Spring 2013 TR 1-2:15, 1217 Mosse Humanities
Instructor: R. Koshar (rjkoshar@wisc.edu)
Office hours: 4101 Mosse Humanities, R 2:30-4:15

“There is no document of civilization that is not simultaneously a document of barbarism.”

“Where we perceive a chain of events, [the angel] sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

--Walter Benjamin

Once regarded as the pinnacle of world civilization, European culture in the twentieth century descended into violent revolution, war, and genocide. What happened? Was the barbarism of the twentieth century already inherent in the culture of the nineteenth? Was Europe able to recoup any of its cultural vitality—in art, philosophy, science, architecture, literature—after the savagery of World War II? What finally affected society more broadly, the accomplishments of “elite” culture, or the coming of cinema, the automobile, mass consumption, and popular music? These and other questions occupy us in History 514, which is a thematically driven survey of European culture since 1870.

Aside from giving students in-depth knowledge of a dramatic and fascinating moment of late modern history, History 514 aims to help students hone their writing, research, and argumentative skills. To that end, we will have a graduate Research and Writing Specialist, who will consult with each student during the course of the semester about writing assignments (see below). In addition, we will have eight discussion sections in which students will have a chance to critique course readings.

Course assignments:

- (1) An essay of three double-spaced pages on a pre-circulated question (due Feb. 14)**
- (2) A research exercise consisting of the following:**
 - a bibliography of at least ten sources (books and articles) on a research topic chosen by the student from a pre-circulated list of topics (due Mar 7)**
 - a one-page double-spaced research prospectus (due Mar 21)**
 - a ten-page double-spaced research paper on a topic chosen by students from a pre-circulated list (due April 30)**

(3) Eight in-class discussions for which students will serve as “lead discussants” at least once during the semester (see dates in class schedule)

(4) In-class cumulative final (May 9)

Besides consulting with our Research and Writing Specialist for the course (more information to follow), students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center’s resources. To take a look at what they offer, see:

<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>

For the papers and bibliography, students should follow Chicago Manual of Style. See:

<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocChicago.html>

You should also be aware of what constitutes plagiarism. See:

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

I’ll accept late papers but they lose one gradation for each day they’re late. 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 class. Attendance is not required but it is noted and will be factored into the discussion grade. Students must stay abreast of the required reading to understand lectures fully and to participate in discussions. **Grading is as follows: 15 percent for the short essay; 45 percent for the research exercise; 20 percent for discussion; 20 percent for the final.** I often “weight” some assignments differently, e.g., improvement during the semester may result in more emphasis being put on the research paper and/or final exam when determining the cumulative grade, or a really stellar discussion grade might offset a mediocre exam grade. Grades are: A=100-93; AB=92-88; B=87-83; BC=82-78; C=77-70; D=69-60.

Required Reading:

James A. Winders, *European Culture Since 1848: From Modern to Postmodern and Beyond* (Palgrave)

Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Bantam Classics)

Peter Fritzsche, ed., *Nietzsche and the Death of God: Selected Writings* (Bedford/St. Martin’s)

Hermann Hesse, *Demian* (HarperCollins)

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

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

Heinrich Böll, *The Train Was on Time* (Melville House)

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Vintage International), pp. 1-123

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

All required reading is available in local bookstores and on reserve at Helen C. White.

Part 1: “This storm is what we call progress...”

Jan 22 Introduction

Jan 24 Nineteenth-Century Contexts: Marx, Darwin, and Others

Jan 29 European Social Change and the Rise of the Realistic Novel

Jan 31 Literary Realism from Balzac to Flaubert

Reading: Winders, 1-98

Feb 5 **Discuss Flaubert**

Feb 7 Dostoevskii’s Message from Underground

Feb 12 Who Has “Culture”? (Popular Entertainments in Urban Europe)

Feb 14 Nietzsche Smites the Philistines

3-page paper due

Feb 19 **Discuss Nietzsche**

Feb 21 Futurism, or Why Filippo Marinetti Loved War

Part 2: “...one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage...”

Feb 26 “Great War” or “Storm of Steel”?

Feb 28 Herman Hesse and Expressionist Germany

Reading: Winders, 99-134

Mar 5 **Discuss Hesse**

Mar 7 Interwar Culture From DADA to Bauhaus

Bibliography due

Mar 12 **Discuss Freud**

Mar 14 Civilization and its Fascist Discontents

Mar 19 **Discuss Silone**

Mar 21 Holocaust, Memory, Testimony

Prospectus due

Spring Recess Mar 23-31

Part 3: “The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed...”

Apr 2 European Culture after World War II: Memory...

Apr 4 ...or the “Inability to Mourn”?

Reading: Winders 135-195

One-page prospectus due

Apr 9 **Discuss Böll**

Apr 11 George Orwell's Animals

Apr 16 Existentialism, or Is Life Worth Living?

Apr 18 **Discuss Camus, pp. 1-123**

Apr 23 Lennon not Lenin

Apr 25 Michel Foucault's Imprisoned Self

Reading: Winders, 196-277

Apr 30 Everyday Culture in "Real Existing Socialism"

Research paper due

May 2 **Discuss Drakulić**

May 7 The Present Ruinous State of Things...and a Glimmer of Hope

May 9 **In-class final**