

# HUM 260

## Postwar European Culture

Winter Term 2015/ CRN 26009

Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 – 11:20 AM/ 121 McKenzie Hall

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:30 – 12: 45

This course addresses the history of the European continent since 1945 in light of humanistic themes and texts reflecting upon various aspects of that history. The course approaches this subject through weekly readings that combine **historical narrative** with **cultural readings** by Europeans that have an especially literary, moral, and visionary quality. Prominent among these are works of fiction (novels) and autobiographical testimony. The course makes a special effort to address the different experiences of eastern and western Europe and Europeans. The chronological focus is postwar Europe, that is, Europe since 1945. Some topics and readings extend back into the period immediately preceding 1945, notably that of World War II.

### METHOD OF THE COURSE

The two class sessions each week will address the history of a particular time period through readings in Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945 by Tony Judt and through some lectures. In addition, for each week there is a cultural reading intended to elicit reflections on that period or on some theme relevant to that period. Usually these are readings written by participants who lived or published at or around the time being considered. For some of the longer cultural readings, such as the novel by Albert Camus, The Plague, the reading is spread over several weeks. The combination of historical and cultural readings provides material for class discussion which will normally take place on Thursday of each week. Students are responsible on exams for class content – discussions and lectures – in addition to the assigned weekly readings. Class attendance and participation are therefore essential to earning a good grade in the course.

In addition to class attendance and participation, several different written assignments are required based on independent work outside of class. There are two kinds of written assignments: reflection papers and course papers. **Reflection papers** provide short reflections (1- 2 pages) on a specified topic using relevant readings and, in one instance, viewing of a film. These are not intended as formal papers and therefore do not require footnoting or citation as in a formal paper, but they should demonstrate independent thinking about a topic and use of the relevant reading or film in doing so. There are **two course papers**. Unlike reflection papers, these are formal papers and must be carefully constructed and written with appropriate citation. Details concerning each paper are provided in the next section.

There are also **two examinations**: a **mid-term** exam (**February 10**) and a **final** exam (**Tuesday, March 17, 8:00 AM**). **IMPORTANT NOTE: The final exam may NOT be taken BEFORE this scheduled time.**

On both examinations, a section will be devoted to one of the major cultural readings. The remainder of the exam will focus on the historical content, including specified readings from Judt, lecture presentations, and, in some instances, source readings relevant to a particular historical theme. Prior to each exam a study guide will be posted on the Blackboard site for the course.

## **COURSE PAPERS**

You will write **two course papers**, each 5-7 pages (12-point type double spaced) in length (1500-2100 words). Topics and books to be used for each paper are described below. Your essay should demonstrate a careful reading of the book and should reference points made in the book in both general terms and with illustrative detail. Base your paper exclusively on the specified book or books; only use other material from the course (assigned readings, lectures) for occasional facts and points of reference for the topic. You may address the topic for the book as a whole or for particular themes or sections of the book, as long as these demonstrate your immersion in the entire book. **DO NOT MERELY SUMMARIZE THE BOOK OR THE STORY IN THE BOOK.**

Due dates for each paper are given below and on the syllabus of weekly topics and readings.

### **First Paper: Due February 17 (Tuesday)**

A paper on Albert Camus' novel The Plague. This may take any approach to discussion or analysis of the novel, except that a summary or re-telling of the story of the novel is not acceptable. Suggested themes for this topic are:

- **Human nature and the human condition.** Examples include: human behavior, morality, the strength or the weakness of belief (religious, humanist, scientific, etc) in extreme situations such as those depicted in the novel
- **The dialogue between religion, or religious belief, and science** as portrayed in characters, scenes, dialogues, and/or the narrator's commentaries and observations
- **Existentialism in the novel:** is the novel existentialist or not? Why or why not, and what sense? Elaborate with references to characters, scenes, and the like. For this topic, you may use assigned readings on existentialism to articulate particular aspects or themes of existentialism that are present in the novel.
- **Setting of the novel:** use description of places and references to everyday life in the city of Oran, habits and attitudes of characters, and examples from dialogues and conversations to situate the novel in its historical setting. In other words, using only the material of this novel, what was "life like" at the time and place depicted in the novel, apart from the exceptional circumstances of the plague?

## **Second Paper: Due March 10 (Tuesday)**

This paper is to be based on one of the following:

### **Gisèle Pineau, Exile According to Julia (a novel)**

The author Gisèle Pineau was born in Paris, and spent the first fourteen years of her life there. Her parents, originally from the island of Guadeloupe, were part of the massive transplantation of Antilleans to the *métropole* after World War II. Born French nationals, all theoretically enjoyed equal footing with the Parisian French. The color of their skin, however, meant a far different reality for Pineau's family and their fellow émigrés. They lived on the outskirts of the city and on the margins of French society and culture. In this novel, born of that experience, Pineau reconstructs the mind-set of alienation and exile in the context of French colonialism, immigration, and racial interaction. She does this with a highly inventive language and style that moves between nostalgia and reality. The novel is thus at once a brilliant literary and poetic tableau as well as a reflection upon exile and cultural dislocation.

You may focus on any theme that makes extensive use of the novel, and you are encouraged, where relevant, to reference other readings of the course, including the Judt textbook, to develop particular points of your discussion. Do not, however, merely re-tell the story of the novel.

### **John Campbell, The Iron Lady: Margaret Thatcher, from Grocer's Daughter to Prime Minister (a biography)**

Use this biography along with relevant chapters and sections from Judt, Postwar, and, if you wish, any other assigned readings in the course, to write an essay that explores the role and the ideas of Margaret Thatcher in relation to any of the major political issues she faced throughout her political career. Among such issues were: the Cold War, European unification, domestic economic policy and labor policy, Britain's role in the world, the welfare state, neo-liberalism.

## **COURSE GRADE**

The grade for the course will be determined as follows, with respective weights indicated for each item:

- Course Papers: 40%
- Exams: 40%
- Class discussion and Reflection Papers: 20%

For course papers and exams, each paper and each exam will be weighted equally for that component of the grade, except that notable improvement in the second paper and in the final exam will result in greater weight assigned to these in determining the grade for the respective paper or exam component.

## RESOURCES FOR THE COURSE

Books listed for common readings and books for paper topics are available for purchase in the Course Textbook Section of the University of Oregon Bookstore.

Other readings are posted on the *Blackboard* site for the course. This site will also be used for postings of study guides for exams and for announcements.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Acquire knowledge of the chronology and major themes of the political, international, socio-economic and cultural history of Europe since 1945
- Develop the capacity of reading literary and philosophical texts with attention to the manner in which these reflect the time of their composition while addressing major issues of human interest
- Develop a sense of the differences between Western Europe and Eastern Europe in their experience of historical and cultural change over the past sixty five years

## SYLLABUS OF REQUIRED WEEKLY READINGS

Books and other sources for weekly readings:

- Tony Judt, Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945 (Penguin Paperback) [for purchase at UO Bookstore]
- Albert Camus, The Plague, translated by Stuart Gilbert [Vintage edition, for purchase at UO Bookstore]
- Ian Buruma, Murder in Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam, and the Limits of Tolerance [for purchase at UO Bookstore]
- Texts posted on *Blackboard*

### 1. Legacies of World War II (January 6, 8)

- Judt, chs. I, II
- Jacques Guicharnaud, “Those Years: Existentialism 1943-1945,” pp. 127-132 [*Blackboard*]
- Camus, The Plague, Part One

### 2. Postwar 1945-1951 (January 13, 15)

- Judt, chs. III-IV
- Camus, The Plague, Part Two
- **January 15: Reflection paper:** Life under occupation, using Jacques Guicharnaud, “Those Years: Existentialism 1943-1945,” pp. 127-132 [*Blackboard*], supplemented, where relevant, with reference to Judt

### 3. Postwar East and West (January 20, 22)

- Judt, chs. V-VI
- Camus, The Plague, Part Three and Part Four

#### 4. Existentialism (January 27, 29)

- Judt, ch. VII
- Jacques Guicharnaud, “Those Years: Existentialism 1943-1945,” pp. 132-145 [*Blackboard*]
- Jean Hippolyte, “A Chronology of French Existentialism” [*Blackboard*]
- Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism,” excerpts [*Blackboard*]
- Jean-Paul Sartre, “What Is Writing?” excerpts [*Blackboard*]
- Camus, The Plague, Part Five

#### 5. Affluent Europe (February 3, 5)

- Judt, chs. X - XI
- **February 3: Reflection paper**: Ingmar Bergman film

#### 6. Nineteen Sixty Eight (February 10, 12)

- Judt, ch. XII
- “Daniel Cohn-Bendit Interviewed by Jean-Paul Sartre” in The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak, pp. 73-83 [*Blackboard*]
- “Interview with Student Activist” [*Blackboard*]
- Simone de Beauvoir. Force of Circumstance, pp. 185-193 [*Blackboard*]
- “Interview with Antoinette Fouque” [*Blackboard*]
- **February 10: Mid-term Exam**: Judt pp. 13-256

#### 7. The “Other” Europe (February 17, 19)

- Judt, chs. VIII (pp. 247-256, 265-277), IX (pp. 309-323), XIII (entire)
- **February 17: First course paper due**

#### 8. Ninteen Eighty Nine (February 24, 26)

- Judt, chs. XVIII-XX
- “A Lesson in Dignity 1979” from Adam Michnik, Letters from Prison and Other Essays, pp. 160-168 [*Blackboard*]
- Václav Havel, “New Year’s Address to the Nation” [*Blackboard*]
- Timothy Garton Ash, Uses of Adversity, Excerpt [*Blackboard*]
- Buruma, Murder in Amsterdam, begin reading

#### 9. Europe’s Novelty and Diversity (March 3, 5)

- Judt, chs. XXII-XXIV
- Buruma, Murder in Amsterdam, finish reading

#### 10. Europe’s Memories (March 10, 12)

- **March 10: Second course paper due**
- Judt, Epilogue: “From the House of the Dead”
- Mircea Cărtărescu, “Europe Has the Shape of My Brain” [*Blackboard*]

**Tuesday, March 17, 8:00 am: Final Examination**