

# HUM 260

## Postwar European Culture

Winter Term 2020/ CRN 26035

Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 – 11:20 am/ 117 Lokey Education Building

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359 McKenzie Hall (phone: 541 346-4832)

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

This course addresses the history of the European continent since 1945 in light of certain 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. The course makes a special effort to address the different situations and experiences of eastern and western Europeans.

### METHOD OF THE COURSE

The course will approach the combination of history and culture through selected themes. Each week will be devoted to one theme. The themes highlight significant trends and turning points in the history of Europe since 1945, without providing a comprehensive survey of that history. Rather the intent is to explore certain connections between these trends and turning points and cultural movements and texts. Readings on historical topics will be taken primarily from Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945 by Tony Judt. These will be supplemented by lectures in class. Only chapters of the Judt text will be read that correspond to each week's theme. The main cultural reading for the first half of the course is The Plague, a novel by Albert Camus. This will be read over several weeks, and discussions will take place for sections of the novel indicated for the week's reading. Historical and cultural readings provide material for class discussion which will normally take place on Thursday of each week. Regular class attendance and participation in discussion are required.

Student work in the course will be assessed in three ways. **First**, short quizzes will be given in class addressing the historical reading in Judt's Postwar. There will be four of these and these will be open-book quizzes. The combined grade for the quizzes will be based on the student's three best quizzes. The purpose of the quizzes is to test each student's reading of the assigned chapters in Judt and grasp of core topics. The dates for each of the quizzes and the chapter or chapters that will be addressed are given on the syllabus. The **second** basis of assessment will be course papers. There will be two of these. Details about each paper are provided below. The **third** assessment will be performance on the final examination. The exam will take place during final exam week. It will cover assigned readings, class lectures, and class discussions for the entire term. Details about the content of the exam will be given in a study guide distributed at least one week prior to the date of the exam.

## COURSE PAPERS

Each student 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. **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 required weekly readings.

### **First Paper: Due February 5 (Wednesday)**

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 and lectures 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 11 (Wednesday)**

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* (mainland France) 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.

**Meredith Veldman, Margaret Thatcher: Shaping the New Conservatism** (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: 50%
- Quizzes (average of three best quizzes): 20%
- Final Examination: 20%
- Attendance and Participation in Class Discussion: 10%

**RESOURCES FOR THE COURSE**

Books listed for common readings and books for paper topics are available for purchase in the Course Materials Section of the UODuck Store (University of Oregon Bookstore).

Other readings are posted on the *Canvas* 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 a capacity for 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 since 1945

## 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 UODuck Store]
- Albert Camus, The Plague, translated by Stuart Gilbert [Vintage edition, for purchase at UODuck Store]
- Ian Buruma, Murder in Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam, and the Limits of Tolerance [for purchase at UODuck Store]
- Texts posted on *Canvas*

### **Week 1 Ending World War II: The Division of East and West (January 6, 8)**

- Judt, chapters IV and V
- Camus, The Plague, Part One

### **Week 2 Postwar Culture: Existentialism (January 13, 15)**

- Judt, chapter VII
- “Sartre” in Makers of Modern Culture (*Canvas*)
- Selections from Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism” and “What Is Writing?” [*Canvas*]
- Camus, The Plague, Part Two
- **January 15 (Wednesday): QUIZZ** on Judt, chapters IV, V

### **Week 3 Postwar Affluence: The West (January 22)**

- Judt, chapter X + Postscript (“A Tale of Two Economies”), chapter XI (pp. 360-373)
- Readings on Consumer Society [*Canvas*]
- Camus, The Plague, Part Three and Part Four

### **Week 4 The Sixties: Western Europe (January 27, 29)**

- Judt, chapter XII
- Readings on the “New Wave” in Cinema [*Canvas*]
- Camus, The Plague, Part Five
- **January 29 (Wednesday): QUIZZ** on Judt chapter XII

### **Week 5 The Sixties and Seventies: Eastern Europe (February 3, 5)**

- Judt, chapters XIII, XVIII
- Timothy Garton Ash, Uses of Adversity, Excerpt [*Canvas*]
- **FEBRUARY 5 (Wednesday): First course paper due**

### **Week 6 Nineteen Eighty-Nine (February 10, 12)**

- Judt, chapter XIX
- “A Lesson in Dignity 1979” from Adam Michnik, Letters from Prison and Other Essays, pp. 160-168 [*Canvas*]
- Václav Havel, “New Year’s Address to the Nation” [*Canvas*]
- **February 12 (Wednesday): QUIZZ** on Judt chapters XVIII, XIX

**Week 7 The New Europe: Integrating an Old Continent (February 17, 19)**

- Judt, chapter XXII
- Buruma, Murder in Amsterdam, chapters One and Two

**Week 8 The New Europe: Interrogating Identities (February 24, 26)**

- Judt, chapter XXIII
- Mircea Cărtărescu, “Europe Has the Shape of My Brain” [*Canvas*]
- Buruma, Murder in Amsterdam, chapters Three and Four
- **February 26 (Wednesday) QUIZZ** on Judt chapter XXII

**Week 9 New Europeans: Challenges of Diversity (March 2, 4)**

- Judt, chapter XXIV
- Buruma, Murder in Amsterdam, chapters Five, Six, Seven

**Week 10 European Memories (March 9, 11)**

- Judt, Epilogue: “From the House of the Dead”
- **March 11 (Wednesday): Second Course Paper Due**

**MARCH 17 (Tuesday): 10:15 AM FINAL EXAMINATION**