

History 428/528

Prof. John McCole

Winter 2019

Class: Tuesdays/Thursdays 10:00-11:20, in 189 PLC

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Office hours: Thursdays 12-2 and by appointment

Major Issues in Twentieth-Century European History

(for course requirements and other policies,
scroll down to the section on “Nuts and Bolts,”
below the weekly schedule)

Course description

This course explores a series of major issues in European history in the twentieth century, understood to include the early twenty-first century. The issues are: the effect of World War I on the “home front,” and how ordinary women’s actions in turn affected official policy; the dynamics of fascism; genocide and political mass murder, examined both as the projects of regimes and as acts on the ground level involving ordinary people; postwar decolonization, focusing on the Algerian war for independence from France (and as seen through the lens of 1960s political film); the demise of Communism in East-Central Europe, taking the Soviet Union, east Germany (once again, in film) and the breakup of Yugoslavia as our cases; a prismatic look at responses to globalization in France; and the pressures created by migration, multi-ethnicity, responses to Muslims in Europe, and populist backlash in the spectacular case examined by Ian Buruma’s *Murder in Amsterdam*.

While these are major issues, this course doesn’t provide “coverage” of Europe’s twentieth-century history. Some familiarity with the basic history of the period will be very helpful. I’ll provide background in my presentations each week and suggest general secondary accounts to help you,

This is a challenging course with a substantial reading load. One aim of the course is to help you learn how to read good history.

Texts

The following are available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

- Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*
- Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*
- Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*
- Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*

- Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*
- Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age*
- Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam, and the Limits of Tolerance*

Other, shorter readings will be available on the course's Canvas website.

I've put copies of the books on four-hour reserve at Knight Library, but see below for a couple of issues.

A recommended text on twentieth-century Europe:

- Konrad Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*
I haven't ordered it at the bookstore, but it's easily available online and is relatively inexpensive. If you took History 303 and have Paxton and Hessler, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, that's good, too.

Schedule

Unit 1: Thinking about Europe's Twentieth Century (January 8, 10)

- Charles Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era" (available under Modules on Canvas)

Unit 2: World War I on the Home Front: Women and the Politics of Everyday Life

(January 15, 17)

- Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*
Introduction (it pays to read the introduction carefully!)

Chapter 1, "Germany from Peace to War"

Chapter 2, "Bread, Cake, and Just Deserts"

Chapter 3, "Women of Lesser Means"

Chapter 5, "One View of How Politics Worked in World War I Berlin," pp. 93-5 only (first page and a half)

Chapter 6, "A Food Dictatorship," pp. 114-121

Chapter 9, "The End of Faith"

Chapter 10, "Germany from War to Peace," p. 219 only (first page)

Unit 3: Understanding Fascism (January 22, 29)

- Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*

Paxton organizes his account of fascism around the idea that we should understand it as going through "five stages: (1) the creation of [fascist] movements; (2) their rooting in the political system; (3) their seizure of power; (4) the exercise of power; (5) and, finally, the long duration, during which the fascist regime chooses either radicalization or entropy" (23). His chapters are

organized around that five stage model, examining one stage per chapter. He also puts forward a definition of fascism at the very end of the book, in the section “What Is Fascism?” (218-220).

- Chapter 1, “Introduction,” pp. 3-9
- Chapter 2, “Creating Movements,” pp. 28-32, 40-42, 52-54
- Chapter 3, “Taking Root,” pp. 55-58, 64-68
- Chapter 4, “Getting Power,” pp. 87-110, 117-118
- Chapter 5, “Exercising Power,” entire chapter (pp. 119-147)
- Chapter 6, “Radicalization or Entropy,” pp. 148-164, 169-171
- Chapter 7, “What Is Fascism?,” pp. 215-220

Unit 4: Genocide and Political Mass Murder I: In the Soviet Union (January 31, February 5)

•Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*

Introduction

- Chapter 1, "The Soviet Famines"
- Chapter 2, "Class Terror"
- Chapter 3, "National Terror"

MIDTERM EXAM:

Thursday, February 7, in class

Unit 5: Genocide and Political Mass Murder II: The Nazis (February 12, 14)

•Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands*:

- Chapter 4, "Molotov-Ribbentrop Europe"
- Chapter 5, "The Economics of Apocalypse"
- Chapter 6, pp. 187-9, 213-17 only
- Chapter 8, "The Nazi Death Factories"

Tuesday, February 19: Genocide on the Ground: The Perpetrators

•Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*:

Preface, xv-xx

- Chapter 1, “One Morning in Józefów”
- Chapter 5, “Reserve Police Battalion 101”
- Chapter 7, “Initiation to Mass Murder: The Józefów Massacre”
- Chapter 8, “Reflections on a Massacre”
- Chapter 18, “Ordinary Men”]]]]

Unit 6: Decolonization: France and Algeria (February 21)

•film: Gillo Pontecorvo, “The Battle of Algiers” (1966)

Unit 7: The Unravelling of Communist Eastern Europe: The Soviet Union (February)

- Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*
Introduction and Chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-112; the pages are small!)

Unit 8: East Germany and Yugoslavia (February 26, 28)

- Norman Naimark, "The Wars of Yugoslav Succession," in Naimark, *The Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*
- film: Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, "The Lives of Others" (2006)

Unit 9: After the Postwar: Europeans Respond to Globalization ()

- Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age*

Unit 10: Migration, Multi-ethnicity, and Muslims in Europe (March)

- Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam, and the Limits of Tolerance*

FINAL EXAM:

MONDAY, MARCH 18. 8-10 a.m., in our regular classroom

NUTS AND BOLTS

What you can expect to learn in this course (a.k.a. learning objectives)

- a series of major topics and episodes in the Europe's history since 1914
- skills in historical reasoning
- "how to read a book:" skills in grasping and analyzing historical works
- skills in using evidence and synthesizing information to make arguments, both verbally and in writing

How the course will work

The course will combine lecture and discussion: as a rule, lectures will be held on Tuesdays and part of Thursdays, with questions and discussion always welcome. A substantial part of Thursday's class will be reserved for discussion. *This course will work only if you come to class every Thursday prepared to discuss the readings.* I'll provide reading and discussion questions each week.

Level and prerequisites

This course is intended for sophomores, juniors, and seniors in any major. Some familiarity with twentieth-century history (not necessarily Europe's) will be helpful.

Required work (for undergraduates; graduate students, please see me)

- midterm exam
- final exam
- essay, 12-15 pages