

**History 110-01**  
**Europe Since 1789**  
**Peter Weisensel**

MWF 8:30-9:30. Old Main 010

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**Course Overview:**

This course provides an introductory survey to European history from the French Revolution to the present day. The course will explain the transformation from an agrarian to an industrial economy and society, and that transformation's effect on change from a monarchical to a mass-democratic government.

I am assuming a general familiarity with modern European history on your part, thanks to things like the History Channel, so I think we can move quickly to questions of interpretation. Rather than attempt to cover everything we will focus on a broad but specific problem of historical interpretation. Are there universal truths in history (right, truth, justice)? Or, does the definition of things like right, truth and justice change, depending on the context of time and place? Are we, by virtue of coming later in history, entitled and qualified to judge people in the past on the basis of what we now think is right, true and just? Do we know universal truth (something that has always been, true) better than people who lived 200-odd years ago? How would we build arguments to support our position in either case?

In addition, by the end of the term students will have acquired a familiarity with the major personalities, institutions and events of the period studied, but also an appreciation of what historians do and how they do it. We will meet three times per week. On some Wednesdays and on most Fridays, the class period will be devoted to discussion of the week's "text." Most of the time the "text" will be a written document of significance, which reflects the times in which it was written. But for some weeks, the "text" will be films.

**Readings:**

(Available at the Macalester Bookstore-Lambert Building):

Kagan, et al., The Western Heritage. Vol. C: 1789-Present;

Voltaire, Candide (1759);

H. von Kleist, The Marquis of O and Other Stories (c. 1810);

Dickens, Hard Times (1854);

Haggard, King Solomon's Mines (1885);

Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front (1929);

Borowski, This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen (1950);

Haffner, Defying Hitler;

Orwell, 1984 (1949).

(Some of the weekly “texts” are reproduced from other books, or are documents available on the web. The former are available in this course’s “course folder.” These readings are indicated in the syllabus as CF. If they are to be downloaded, the website addresses are indicated in the syllabus.

### **Assignments:**

Our major activity in the term will be the study and discussion of original, primary materials, which allow us to encounter the past on its own terms. Each week some work of political, literary, or film art will provide the focus for the discussion. These are the “texts” mentioned above. We, however, will approach them less as art than as historical artifacts, that is, as pieces of the past that tell us something about the era in which they appeared. We should not, however, take them as literal “truth,” but rather as statements of the worries, arguments and imagined triumphs of each era. In a way they are fictional, but for us they reflect real-world conditions of the time.

In preparation for the discussions and writing assignments you will need to be familiar with these texts. Each week you will want to ask yourself a set of questions as you read (or as you see, since some weeks the “text” is a film) these materials. In every case the key questions are:

1. Do the conditions of creation (the context) explain the views in the text of the week? Here a scholar would try to find answers to additional questions, such as:
  - a. Who made this?; when?; where? why?) Is there anything to be gained by the author in some way in writing this way?
  - b. What does the text (film, book, excerpt from a book) reveal of the social, economic and political circumstances of the era? Do those circumstances impact the content of the text?
  - c. What are the cultural values of the writer of that age? Is the writer one who accepts the dominant culture or does (s)he challenge it?
2. An alternative way of looking at things would be to ask: Are the views expressed in the text of the week a reflection of the flawed ideas of those times? Here a scholar might ask:
  - a. What is the “ideal” way of behaving in any era?
  - b. How do we know that there is an “ideal” way to live and behave?
  - c. Looking backward to previous eras, does this text of the week reflect any “progress” toward the ultimate “ideal”?
  - d. Is the author of the text somehow better qualified than others to describe what the “ideal” is?

The evaluation of each student's work will be based on:

- a. three essays of 1200-1500 words (5-7 pp. double-spaced pages) each (together 80%), prepared at home;
- b. class attendance and your contributions to class discussions (20%).

The most important part of your grade will be the essays. I think it is important to understand what I am looking for so that you know how to approach these assignments. In all of these essays it will be crucial to have an argument, or a point of view, which your essay will try to get your reader to accept. Remember that the writer is like a lawyer arguing a case before a jury (his/her readers); the goal is to convince the jury to agree with you. The facts or data are important too, but only as evidence to back up your argument. You will get the facts from readings and lectures. However, a paper which is just a "fact pit", lacking an argument, will not get a very good grade, just as a paper which is nothing more than telling what you think, like a letter to the editor, without evidence to support it, also will not get a very good grade. I will help you by posing your essay assignment questions as "problems" which I will explain but which you will solve. Posed that way you should have no trouble presenting a paper which has an argument.

I will look for the following key features in your essays:

1. The introductory paragraph. This will be where you will explain the problem and where you will tell your readers what you are going to argue. This is the most important part of the essay and it cannot just float aimlessly.

2. A thoroughly developed argument. Here in the middle part of your essay you will thoroughly make your argument. Each paragraph will make a separate point. Each paragraph will serve the argument of the essay; a paragraph will not be a dumping ground for "interesting stuff" which you don't know how to use elsewhere. Evidence from readings, lectures and discussion sessions will be utilized to back up your points. Here also, you shouldn't overlook anything important from the class materials that can help you. Needless to say, you will have to read everything assigned for the essay by the time you write the essay. Footnotes are not necessary! If, however, you want to quote an author word-for-word, then cite the source of the quotation in parentheses (...) in the text immediately after the quote.

3. A conclusion. Here you may want to summarize your argument. However, the most important element of the conclusion will be your explanation of the significance of your findings. For example, how should your findings guide our thinking in the future? Or, what do your findings tell us about potentially fruitful lines of inquiry in the future (what should researchers do next)? etc.

In the past the following problems have frequently appeared in students' essays:

a. Essay lacks a clear point/goal/argument. The essay just "talks about" a subject rather than presents an argument about it.

b. Essay fails to use the material at hand, especially ideas that could really help you, suggesting that you didn't understand a book or article, or worse, that you didn't read it.

c. Essay is not written clearly for an audience of readers. Writers sometimes overlook the fact that writing means writing for others to read and understand. If a writer's syntax, or choice of terms, or organization is so idiosyncratic that only the writer understands what's going on, the purpose of writing in the first place is lost. The reader is like a blind man walking in a lightless tunnel unless you "take his hand" by being clear and organized.

d. Presenting an essay that has not been proofread, leaving it full of misspellings and sloppy and unintelligible syntax.

e. Essay lacks a conclusion, or has conclusion that does nothing more than summarize the argument.

You will be expected to come to class with the materials read and ready to discuss them. Essay topics will be assigned a couple of weeks before they are due. I will read and offer suggestions on drafts, but the paper you submit on the due-date will be the one to get the grade. Don't turn in papers late as those papers will be penalized. All work will be evaluated on the basis of how directly responsive to the assignment it is, how clear and coherent the thesis is, and how substantive an historical argument (i.e., how well you have mastered the factual data, considering the lectures and readings) you provide in defense of your thesis.

### **Class Schedule:**

#### Week One

Voltaire, Candide (Macalester Bookstore)

Wednesday, September 7. Introduction. Why did they behave like that?

Friday, September 9. The Enlightenment as Revolution.

#### Week 2

Kagan, Ch. 19;

Burke, Reflections of the Revolution in France (Moodle);

Cahier of the Third Estate of Carcassone.

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/cahier.html>;

Cahier of the Nobility of Blois

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/cahiers1.html>

Monday, September 12. Discussion of Candide. The Ancien Regime

Wednesday, September 14. The French Republic

Friday, September 16. Discussion of Week 2 Documents (Burke and the 2 cahiers).

#### Week 3

Kagan, 19-20;

Documents on the French Revolution and Napoleon:

The National Convention, 1792.

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/natcon.html>

St. Just, Republican Institutes

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/stjust.html>

Robespierre, On the Principles...

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1794robespierre.html>

Napoleon, Account of the Internal Situation in France in 1804.

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/NAPOLEON.html>

Monday, September 19. Revolutionary Extremism and Robespierre

Wednesday, September 21 Rise and and Fall of Napoleon

Friday, September 23. Discussion of Week 3 documents.

Week 4

Kagan, 20 (pp. 704-27), 21;

H. von Kleist, "Betrothal in Santo Domingo," in Marquis of O and Other Stories.

Monday, September 26. Revenge of the French Revolution: Romanticism and Nationalism.

Wednesday, September 28. Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution as a New Context.  
Discussion of "Betrothal in Santo Doimingo."

Friday, September 30. **First Essay due in class.**

Week 5

Kagan, 22 (pp. 765-83);

Dickens, Hard Times.

Monday, October 3. "Dark Satanic Mills."

Wednesday, October 5. The New Masters.

Friday, October 7. Discussion of Hard Times.

Week 6

Kagan, 22;

Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto (excerpts)(Moodle);

Samuel Smiles, Self Help (excerpts).

<http://fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1882smiles.html>

Monday, October 10. Conservatives Up Against the Wall. Revolutions of 1848

Wednesday, October 12. Socialism.

Friday, October 14. Discussion of Communist Manifesto and Self Help.

Week 7

Kagan, 23-24;

Haggard, King Solomon's Mines.

Monday, October 17. The Conservatives "Wise Up": Napoleon III, Alexander II, and especially Bismarck.

Wednesday, October 19. Imperialism and European Values

Friday, October 21. Discussion of King Solomon's Mines.

Week 8

Kagan, 25-26;

Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front.

Monday, October 24. World War I as Challenge. Revolution in Russia.

Wednesday, October 26. Discussion of All Quiet on the Western Front.

Friday, October 28 (**No Class, Fall Break**)

Week 9

Kagan, 27;

Ortega y Gasset, Revolt of the Masses (Moodle).

Monday, October 31. **Second Essay Due in Class.** Liberal Democracy between the World Wars.

Wednesday, November 2. Stalin and "Progress."

Friday, November 4. Discussion of Revolt of the Masses.

Week 10

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Kagan, 28;

Haffner, Defying Hitler.

Monday, November 7. Fascism and "Progress" in Italy and Germany.

Wednesday, November 9. Western Democracies at the Outbreak of World War II.

Friday, November 11. Discussion of Defying Hitler.

Week 11

Kagan, 29;

Borowski, This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Monday, November 14. World War II.

Wednesday, November 16. The Cold War and Superpower Domination in Europe, 1945-68.

Friday, November 18. Discussion of This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen.

Week 12

Kagan, 30;

Orwell, 1984.

Monday, November 21. Postwar Economics and Political Stability: The Modern Welfare State; French and German Models of Worker-Employer Relations.

Wednesday, November 23. Discussion of 1984.

Friday, November 25 (**No Class, Thanksgiving Break**)

Week 13

Kagan, 31;

Film: "The Battle of Algiers."

Monday, November 28. DeColonialization and Its Limits.

**Tuesday eve, (7:00). Showing of "Battle of Algiers."** (alternate viewing arrangements are possible).

Wednesday, November 30. Impact on Great Britain and France.

Friday, December 2 Discussion of "Battle of Algiers."

Week 14

Gorbachev, On My Country and the World (excerpts) (Moodle).

Monday, December 5. The Years 1968 and 1973 as Watersheds.

Wednesday, December 7. Significance of Mikhail Gorbachev.

Friday, December 9. Discussion of On My Country and the World.

Week 15

Monday, December 12. Last Day of class. Wrap-up.

**Third Essay due Friday December 16th in my office by 5 p.m.**