

# The World in the Twentieth Century

([www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/world](http://www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/world))

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Office Hours: M 10-11; W 12:50-1:50; F 11-12 and by appointment  
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## Course Description

This class examines global issues in the contemporary world, focusing mainly on the post-World War II period, from the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, to the complex, high-tech, evolving world of today. We will view this history from the point of view of those living it, including students in the class themselves. Everyone has an “historical consciousness,” an understanding of the way the world became what it is today, and the main purpose of this class is to introduce students to alternative ways of interpreting history by weighing the merits of differing points of view. We will examine the world by regions with a number of themes in mind: the Cold War; the rise & fall of communism; nationalism; the rise of terrorism; de-colonization/neo-colonialism; the international economy; racial, ethnic, & religious conflict; gender; class; & environmental issues.

## Course Goals

- Students will learn that history is not just the memorization of dates and facts, but rather the *interpretation* of the past
- Students will acquire a knowledge of the key terms, facts, and events in contemporary world history and thereby gain an informed historical perspective
- Students will take from the class the skills to critically appraise varying historical arguments and to clearly express their own interpretations
- Students will learn how to critically read and distinguish between different types of historical sources and to “read between the lines” of differing points of view
- Students will experience “hands-on” work with primary source material and gain insight on how to interpret history through such sources
- Students will develop analytical skills and the ability to apply principles and generalizations learned in this class to other problems and situations
- Students will develop the ability to synthesize and integrate information and ideas as well as to distinguish between fact and opinion
- Students will be encouraged to develop an openness to new ideas and, most importantly, the capacity to think critically

## Readings:

- *How We Survived Communism & Even Laughed*, Slavenka Drakulić
- *Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini
- *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places*, Le Ly Hayslip
- Reserve & online material identified below
- Optional: *The World Transformed: 1945 to the Present*, Michael H. Hunt

**Course Web Page:** The extensive course web page at [www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/world](http://www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/world) has class notes and readings; Video and Audio Archives; Maps; Visual Tours; Internet Resources; and

Internet Assignments. In addition, we will utilize some aspects of the Blackboard course web page such as the E-Reserves function and the Discussion Board.

<b>Course Activities:</b>	Two 3-4 page papers	15% each
	Midterm Exam	15%
	Participation	30%
	Final Exam	25%

**Papers:** There are two papers for the course (3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font) that are worth 15% each. The first is a set topic at the beginning of the semester (see the assignment below), while the other one allows for a choice of possible topics (see the topics on the course web page and the due date below). Refer to the Paper Guidelines for these assignments. All essays will be graded on the basis of these criteria:

- 1) Level of analysis/argumentation. Present a thoughtful argument and interpretation, *not* a mere summary of facts. (Note: it does not matter which side of an issue one argues, only how well or how poorly one makes the argument).
- 2) Use of evidence. The material you select to support your thesis must be relevant and must clearly back up your argument.
- 3) Clarity of communication. You must present the evidence and express your argument in a clear, comprehensible manner.

<p><b>A</b> = excellent performance on all three criteria. <b>B</b> = above average on all three, or excellent on some tempered by flaws in others. <b>C</b> = average across the board, or above average in part but with significant flaws. <b>D</b> = below average overall performance.</p>
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**Exams:** There is a midterm and a final for the course comprised of Identifications and Short Answer Questions. The exams cover *only* the part of the course for which they are designated so they are *not cumulative*. However, the final exam includes a comprehensive Take Home Essay (worth 10% of the overall course grade) that draws on broad themes dealt with all semester.

**Participation:** Your 30% participation grade is based on the Discussion Sections led by the Teaching Assistants. The grade consists of online Discussion Posts (1-2 paragraphs in response to the prompts designated below), Internet Assignments, and Reaction Pieces (1-2 pages; these are intended to be your reaction to or opinion of the readings, not a summary of the material) to the readings designated below. **Attendance is required in the Discussion Sections;** students have one *excused* absence without penalty, but unexcused absences and everything beyond the one excused absence will lead to 3 points being subtracted from the final participation grade.

**Grading:** Grades are compiled on a point system. For example, if you make a 88 on the 1<sup>st</sup> paper (13.2/15) + an 90 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paper (13.5/15) + 86 on the Mid-term (12.9/15) + 90 on participation (27/30) + 88 on the Final (13.2/15) + 90 on your Final Take Home Essay (9/10), your Final Grade = 88.8 = 89 or B+. Grades will be posted on Blackboard.

## Lecture & Assignment Schedule:

Monday, August 14. Introduction: The Study of History & WWII

**\*\*1<sup>st</sup> Paper Assignment: In your opinion, what were the main reasons US President Harry Truman decided to use atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945? Do you agree or disagree with his decision?** Required Sources: “Thank God for the Atomic Bomb” by Paul Fussell; “Hiroshima: Needless Slaughter, Useful Terror” by William Blum; *Extra!* Update, “Media to Smithsonian: History is Bunk”; Government documents (Stimson’s diary entry and President Truman’s meeting with advisers); and *Basic Information on the Bomb*; “Second Guessing Hiroshima”; “Hiroshima: Was it Necessary?” by Doug Long; A Petition to the President of the United States; and “The Decision That Launched the *Enola Gay*” by John Correll. Optional sources: web pages from the course web page directory and additional sites or material you identify. Refer to the Paper Guidelines for how to do citations and other questions regarding this assignment. **Due: Monday, August 28**

Wednesday, August 16. The Origins of the Cold War

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN CURRY 225 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY}**

Friday, August 18. The Origins of the Cold War (cont’d)

Monday, August 21. Russia, Marxism-Leninism, & the USSR.

Wednesday, August 23. Stalinism in the Soviet Union & Truman’s Decision to Bomb Japan

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, August 25: the material for the 1<sup>st</sup> Paper Assignment listed above; **BRING AN OUTLINE OF YOUR PAPER WITH A CLEARLY STATED THESIS and 2-3 SUPPORTING POINTS TO TURN IN**

Friday, August 25. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

BEGIN READING: *How We Survived Communism & Even Laughed*; \*\*RP due Friday, Sept. 8

Monday, August 28. Yugoslavia & War in the Balkans. **1<sup>st</sup> Paper Due in class**

Wednesday, August 30. Yugoslavia & War in the Balkans (cont’d)

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, September 1: 1) speech by Soviet leader Andrei Zhdanov and the Truman Doctrine; 2) “Russia Is Finished” by Jeffrey Tayler and “Don’t Count Russia Out: A Reply to Jeffrey Tayler” by W. George Krasnow; **POST YOUR REACTIONS TO THESE TWO SETS OF READINGS ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON**

Friday, September 1. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Wednesday, September 6. Yugoslavia & Conflict in the Balkans (cont’d)

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Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, September 8: *How We Survived Communism & Even Laughed*; **\*\*Reaction Piece due in Discussion Sections**  
Friday, September 8. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

BEGIN READING *Kite Runner*; **\*\*RP** due Friday, September 29

Monday, September 11. Traditional India

Wednesday, September 13. India: the Struggle for Independence

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, September 15: *Time*'s Man of the Year for 1930: Mohandas K. Gandhi; excerpts from *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya; **POST YOUR REACTION TO THESE READINGS ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION'S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON**

Friday, September 15. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, September 18. India & Neighbors Since Independence

Wednesday, September 20. A Region in Conflict: India & Pakistan

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN CURRY 225 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY}**

Friday, September 22. Afghanistan: A Country in Turmoil

Monday, September 25. Afghanistan in the "War on Terrorism"

Wednesday, September 27. China: from Confucianism to Communism

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, September 29: *Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini; **\*\*Reaction Piece due in Discussion Sections**

Friday, September 29: DISCUSSION SECTIONS

BEGIN READING *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places*; **\*\*RP** due Friday, October 20

Monday, October 2. The People's Republic of China

Wednesday, October 4. Mao & China's "Constant Revolution"

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, October 6: "Lei Feng, Chairman Mao's Good Little Fighter"; and "Father is Close, Mother is Close, but Neither Is as Close as Chairman Mao" from *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang; **POST YOUR REACTION TO THESE READINGS ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION'S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON**

Friday, October 6. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Wednesday, October 11. China Since Mao

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN CURRY 225 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY}**

Friday, October 13. The Origins of the Vietnam War

Monday, October 16. The US in Vietnam

Wednesday, October 18. The US in Vietnam (cont'd)

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, October 20: *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places* by Le Ly Hayslip; **\*\*Reaction Piece due in Discussion Sections**

Friday, October 20. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, October 23. **MID-TERM EXAM**

Wednesday, October 25. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN CURRY 225 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY; HOWEVER, POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE INTERNET ASSIGNMENT “Operation Ajax” ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON}**

Friday, October 27. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism (cont'd)

Monday, October 30. Iraq & the First Gulf War

Wednesday, November 1. Iraq & the Second Gulf War

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN CURRY 225 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY; HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD READ “Excerpts from the 9/11 National Commission Report on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States” (Chapters 7 & 10) and POST YOUR REACTION ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON}**

Friday, November 3. Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Monday, November 6. The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont'd)

Wednesday, November 8. The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont'd)

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, November 10: Excerpt from *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* by Ghada Karmi; **\*\*Reaction Piece to this reading due in Discussion Sections**

Friday, November 10. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, November 13. The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Is there hope for peace?

Wednesday, November 15. South Africa: the Roots of Apartheid

- Reading & Assignment for Discussion Sections for Friday, November 17: short stories “City Lovers” & “Country Lovers” by Nadine Gordimer; and **POST YOUR RESPONSES TO THE INTERNET ASSIGNMENT “Apartheid on Trial” ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON**  
Friday, November 17. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, November 20. South Africa: The Rise & Fall of Apartheid

Monday, November 27. South Africa Since Apartheid. 2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Due in class

Wednesday, November 29. South America: Chile

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN CURRY 225 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY}**

Friday, December 1. Central America: Guatemala

Monday, December 4. The World Today

**Final Exam: Friday, December 8      8/9:00-11:00**