

# The World in the Twentieth Century

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

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## Course Description

This class will examine 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

There are several specific goals to achieve for the course:

- By the end of the class students will understand 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 an understanding of how to read 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

## Course Readings:

- *Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini
- *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places*, Le Ly Hayslip
- *Matigari*, Ngugi wa Thiong’o
- *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, Rigoberta Menchu & Elisabeth Burgos-Debray
- E-Reserve & online material identified below
- Optional: *The World Transformed: 1945 to the Present*, Michael H. Hunt
- Optional: *Hammond World Atlas*, Theodore Roethke

**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 <https://blackboard.uncg.edu> such as the E-Reserves function and the Discussion Board.

<b>Course Activities:</b>	Three 3-4 page papers	10% each
	Midterm Exam	10%
	Participation	35%
	Final Exam	25%

**Papers:** There are three papers for the course (3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font) that are worth 10% each. The first is a set topic at the beginning of the semester (see the assignment below), while the other two allow for a choice of possible topics (see the topics on the course web page and the due dates 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 points. <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, Multiple Choice, True-False, and Short Answer Questions. **The Midterm Exam is scheduled for the evening of the date designated below; make sure you make arrangements to take the exam at that time.** 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 35% participation grade is based on the Discussion Sections led by the Teaching Assistants. The grade consists of online Discussion Posts, 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. Students who miss due to a legitimate reason should contact their Teaching Assistant to make-up work.

**Grading:** Grades are compiled on a point system. For example, if you make a 90 on the 1<sup>st</sup> paper (9/10) + an 80 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paper (8/10) + an 85 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> paper (8.5/10) + 84 on the Mid-term (8.4/10) + 90 on participation (31.5/35) + 82 on the Final (12.3/15) + 90 on your Final Take Home Essay (9/10), your Final Grade = **86.7 = 87** or B+. Grades will be posted on Blackboard.

**Lecture & Assignment Schedule:**

Monday, January 9. 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: (E-Reserve) “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 (on the Course Web Page) *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, January 23**

Wednesday, January 11. The Holocaust & the Origins of the Cold War

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN SCIE 201 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY}**

Friday, January 13. The Origins of the Cold War (cont’d)

Wednesday, January 18. Stalinism & the Soviet Union

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, January 20: 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, January 20. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, January 23. Stalinism & the Soviet Union (cont’d). **1<sup>st</sup> Paper Due in class**

Wednesday, January 25. The Soviet Union After Stalin

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, January 27: 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, January 27. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, January 30. Yugoslavia & War in the Balkans

Wednesday, February 1. Yugoslavia & Conflict in the Balkans (cont’d)

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, February 3: Material on the Wars in Yugoslavia; **POST YOUR REACTION TO THESE READINGS ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION'S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON**

Friday, February 3. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

BEGIN READING *Kite Runner*; **\*\*RP** due Friday, February 24

Monday, February 6. Traditional India

Wednesday, February 8. India: the Struggle for Independence

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, February 10: *Time's* Man of the Year for 1930: Mohandas K. Gandhi; excerpts from *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya; **\*\*Reaction Piece to these readings due in Discussion Sections**

Friday, February 10. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, February 13. India & Neighbors Since Independence

Wednesday, February 15. A Region in Conflict: India & Pakistan

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN SCIE 201 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY}**

Friday, February 17. Afghanistan: A Country in Turmoil

Monday, February 20. Afghanistan in the "War on Terrorism"

Wednesday, February 22. China: from Confucianism to Communism

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, February 24: *Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini; **\*\*Reaction Piece to this reading due in Discussion Sections**

Friday, February 24: DISCUSSION SECTIONS

BEGIN READING *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places*; **\*\*RP** due Friday, March 17

Monday, February 27. The People's Republic of China

Wednesday, March 1. The PRC Today

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, March 3: "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, March 3. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, March 13. The Origins of the Vietnam War

Wednesday, March 15. The Vietnam War & After

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, March 17: *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places* by Le Ly Hayslip; **\*\*Reaction Piece to this reading due in Discussion Sections**  
Friday, March 17. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, March 20. **Mid-term Exam (to be held IN THE EVENING 7:00-8:30 in SCIE 201);**  
Optional Review Session during regular class time

Wednesday, March 22. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN SCIE 201 at 9:00 ON FRIDAY; HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE INTERNET ASSIGNMENT “OPERATION AJAX” ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON}**

Friday, March 24. Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism (cont’d)

Monday, March 27. Iraq & the First Gulf War

Wednesday, March 29. Iraq & the Second Gulf War

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, March 31: Excerpts from the 9/11 National Commission Report on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (Chapters 7 & 10); **POST YOUR REACTION TO THIS READING ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON**

Friday, March 31. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, April 3. Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Wednesday, April 5. The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont’d)

- Assignment for Discussion Sections for Friday, April 7: Those whose Last Names begin with A-J should do the Internet Assignment “What Would Muhammad Drive?”; those whose Last Names begin with K-Z should do the Internet Assignment “Reel Bad Arabs”; **POST YOUR RESPONSES TO THE INTERNET ASSIGNMENT ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY THURSDAY AT NOON**

Friday, April 7. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

BEGIN READING *Matigari*; **\*\*RP** due Friday, April 21

Monday, April 10. The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Is there hope for peace? **2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Due in class**

Wednesday, April 12. West Africa: Ghana

Monday, April 17. East Africa: Kenya

Wednesday, April 19. South Africa: the Rise & Fall of Apartheid

- Reading for Discussion Sections for Friday, April 21: excerpt from *Eye of the Family* by V. Harden and *Matigari*; **\*\*Reaction Piece to these readings due in Discussion Sections**  
Friday, April 21. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

BEGIN READING *I, Rigoberta Menchu*; Internet Assignment “Rigmarole Over Rigoberta” due (see below) Monday, May 1

Monday, April 24. South Africa: The Rise & Fall of Apartheid (cont’d). **3<sup>rd</sup> Paper Due in class**

Wednesday, April 26. South America: Argentina

- Reading & Assignment for Discussion Sections for Friday, April 28: 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, April 28. DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Monday, May 1. South America (cont’d): Chile

**{NOTE: WE WILL NOT HAVE DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK; MEET IN SCIE 201 at 9:00 ON TUESDAY; HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD POST YOUR RESPONSE TO THE INTERNET ASSIGNMENT “Rigmarole Over Rigoberta” ON YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION’S BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION BOARD BY MONDAY AT NOON}**

Tuesday, May 2. Central America: Guatemala

**Final Exam: Friday, May 5 8/9:00-11:00**