

Western Civilization, HSS 102-03
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Texts:

Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution (Carnes & Kates)
The Great War and Modern Memory (Paul Fussell)
Any Western Civ. Textbook—any edition; used is fine

This is a brief overview of the course. A more detailed syllabus will follow.

In this course we will focus on two major turning points in the history of the West (three if there is time): the French Revolution, WWI, and possibly the Russian Revolution. We will begin with the Enlightenment to see how new discoveries in science and political philosophy led, some would say inevitably, to the French Revolution. We will spend a significant amount of time on the French Revolution, its proponents, and its detractors, and learn how it paved the way for modern Europe, nationalism, and ultimately World War I, aka. The Great War.

The class will involve lots of discussion based on selected readings, and you will be expected/invited to think about ideas both as they relate to today's world and as they must have seemed to someone living in an earlier age. You will, in short, be required to exercise your historical imagination. This will be more a matter of really understanding various ideas, thinkers, and events than of memorizing facts, which without a human context can be dry as crackers.

An understanding of Western Civilization is more imperative in the twenty-first century than ever. We need to know where the ideas we say we're willing to die for came from and why they are important—or why they aren't. Our approach will be rhetorical; that is, we will argue (attempt to persuade) that certain ideas are valid and others not. Sometimes we will do this in our own voices, at others we will adopt a historical persona and argue from a point of view that may be totally opposed to our own. This course will require you to be an active learner. I will be one too. I see this class as not just an opportunity for me to drill you on a body of information but as a chance for me to expand my own knowledge and understanding of history as well. In this sense, we will be collaborative learners. All that is required for you to succeed are a lively sense of curiosity and an open mind.

Attendance is required, and class participation will affect your grade. The amount of your contribution to class discussions is important, but even more important is the quality of your comments. Your grade will be determined by a mid-term exam (25%), work done for *Recreating the Past: the French Revolution* (25%), a final exam (25%), and a book review (25%).

Topical Outline:

Rise of modern nation-state

Scientific Revolution

Age of Enlightenment

French Revolution

Napoleon

Industrial Revolution

Romanticism, Liberalism, Socialism, Nationalism

Congress of Vienna & European Revolutions

Marx & Darwin

Nationalism in Italy & Germany

Responses to Industrialization

Imperialism & the Scramble for Africa

World War One

Russian Revolution

Stalin