

Spring 2009: History 706 Jones  
T 6:30-9:20 3207 MHRA

## Colloquium in European History from 1789

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Office Hours: M 9:30-10:30; T 1-2; W 10:30-11:30; and by appointment	

### Course Description

The American Heritage Dictionary defines “colloquium” as “An academic seminar on a broad field of study, usually led by a different lecturer at each meeting.” This graduate-level seminar holds true to that definition by having students facilitate discussions of some of the most important works representing the major historiographical trends, issues, and problems in modern European history from the French Revolution through World War II.

The class is arranged around weekly discussions of texts covering a wide range of topics; classes will be led by teams of students who will facilitate discussion by formulating questions germane to that week’s text. Our primary tasks will be to identify authors’ arguments, methodologies, and source bases, as well as to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their works.

### Learning Outcomes

- Students will acquire knowledge of some of the key issues and debates in the broad historiography of modern Europe
- Students will gain insight on the historiography of a specific topic in modern European history by writing a historiographical essay
- Students will obtain the knowledge and skills to critically appraise varying historical arguments and formulate their own interpretations
- Students will learn how to critically read and distinguish between different methodologies and to “read between the lines” of differing points of view
- Students will participate in a respectful and thoughtful manner in discussions of a variety of topics both online and in the classroom
- Students will develop analytical skills and the ability to apply principles and generalizations learned in this class to other problems and situations

### Course Activities

Participation	30%
3 Book Reviews (2-3 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced)	15% each
Historiographical Essay (12-15 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced)	25%

### Teaching Strategy

At the first meeting we will divide the class into groups and divide the twelve weekly readings (not counting the first one) among the groups. Every student in the class is responsible for reading every assigned reading for every week, and if it becomes apparent that students are not doing the reading, their participation grade will suffer accordingly. The group leaders for their designated classes will be responsible for leading that week’s

discussion, which means coming up with a list of questions to post on Blackboard by Saturday at midnight of the week they are to lead the class. Group members are encouraged to do this by consultation, either through meetings or via email; lack of involvement in this process will negatively impact on the participation grade (see below). Students outside of the designated group should respond to some aspect of the Blackboard prompts by Monday at midnight in order to receive full credit for participation for that week's discussion. In addition, each member of the designated group should write a book review (2-3 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced) of the book/readings for the week that they lead discussion (see below). Finally, each student will write an historiographical essay (see below) dealing with some aspect of modern European history.

### **Participation**

Obviously in a discussion-based seminar of this nature class participation is crucial. The 30% participation grade will be broken down as follows: for each of the thirteen weeks we will be discussing readings, one point will be for participation in the online discussion on Blackboard, and one point will be for in-class participation. The remaining four points will be based on in-class participation.

### **Book Reviews**

As noted, each student will write three book reviews, worth 15% each of the course grade, corresponding to the titles of their group's designated weeks. This is the one activity that individuals within the group should do *individually*; although, of course, group members are free to proofread and comment on each others' essays, the final product should be the work of each individual group member, rather than a collective effort. Students should feel free to consult published reviews with the clear understanding that their review shall be their own work. The book reviews should be concise (2-3 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced) and should convey the author's argument and methodology clearly, as well as describe the source base(s) on which the work(s) are based. Most importantly, the reviews should assess the strengths and weaknesses of the works under review.

### **Historiographical Essay**

Students will write a historiographical essay, worth 25% of the overall course grade, identifying the major works, trends, and issues of any topic of the student's interest relevant to modern European history. The essay (12-15 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced) should convey the major themes covered in the works examined as well as differences between varying treatments of similar topics. For each work discussed in the essay students should consider the following questions: What is the author's thesis? What sources/evidence does the author rely on? Where does the book fit with historiographical trends in the field? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the book, i.e. how convincing is the author's interpretation and the book's overall argument? Finally, a strong essay will relate the works examined to each other in a clear and logical manner.

### **Course Schedule**

January 20: Introduction: Discussion of *History and Historians*, Mark Gilderhus

January 27: Discussion of *Orientalism*, Edward Said, led by the instructor

- February 3: Discussion of *Islam & the West*, Bernard Lewis, led by Group 1
- February 10: Discussion of *Origins of the French Revolution*, William Doyle, led by Group 2
- February 17: Discussion of *The Family Romance the French Revolution*, Lynn Hunt, led by Group 3
- February 24: Discussion of *The New Cultural History*, edited by Lynn Hunt, led by Group 4
- March 3: Discussion of *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982*, Gareth Stedman Jones, led by Group 1
- March 17: Discussion of *Making of the British Working Class*, E. P. Thompson, led by Group 2
- March 24: Discussion of *The Bolsheviks in Power*, Alexander Rabinowitch, led by Group 3
- March 31: Discussion of *A Biography of No Place*, Kate Brown, led by Group 4
- April 7: Discussion of *Night & Stone: Death & Memory in Twentieth Century Russia*, Catherine Merridale, led by Group 1
- April 14: Discussion of *Gender & War in Twentieth Century Europe*, edited by Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur, led by Group 2
- April 21: Discussion of *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Daniel Goldhagen, led by Group 3
- April 28: Discussion of *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Christopher Browning; OPTIONAL READING: "Little Hitlers" by Elie Wiesel; "Ordinary Monsters" by Omer Bartov; "Holocaust Views: The Goldhagen Controversy in Retrospect" by Istvan Deak; "The Goldhagen Controversy" by Jeremiah M. Riemer and Andrei S. Markovits, led by Group 4

**Historiographical Essays due Monday, May 11 by 5:00 PM**