

Colloquium in European History from 1789

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Office Hours: M 10:00-11; T 12:00-1; R 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 “Colloquium in European History from 1789” 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 and postwar reconstruction.

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.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Identify some of the key issues of debate in the broad historiography of modern Europe
- Evaluate and synthesize scholarly arguments on a specific topic in modern European history by writing a historiographical essay
- Critically appraise varying historical arguments and formulate their own interpretations
- Critically read and distinguish between different methodologies and “read between the lines” of differing points of view
- Participate in a respectful and thoughtful manner in discussions of a variety of topics

Course Activities

Participation	20%
4 Book Reviews (2-3 pages/500-750 words); 12-point font; double-spaced)	10% each
Oral Presentation	10%
Historiographical Essay (12-15 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced)	30%

Teaching Strategy

At the first meeting we will divide the class into groups and divide the readings among the groups. *Every student in the class is responsible for reading every assigned title for every week*, and if it becomes apparent that students are not doing the reading, their participation grade will suffer accordingly. Group members for a designated class will be responsible for leading that week’s discussion. As part of this responsibility, group members should compile a list of discussion questions based on the title for their week and email those questions to the class as a whole *no later than Tuesday at noon of the week they are to lead the class discussion*. 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. In addition, each member of the designated group should write a review (500-750 words, 12-point font, double-spaced) of the book for the week that they lead discussion (see below). Students outside of the designated group for a given week should come prepared to discuss the main aspects of the book for that week, i.e. the author’s thesis, sources, methodology, and where the book belongs within the broader historiography on the subject. Finally, each student will write an historiographical essay (see below) dealing with some aspect of modern European history, and give a 10-15 minute oral presentation of their findings at our final class meeting during the exam period.

Participation

Obviously in a discussion-based seminar of this nature class participation is crucial. The 20% participation grade will be based on in-class participation, with an emphasis on the *quality* of input rather than the quantity of input.

Book Reviews

As noted, each student will write four book reviews, worth 10% 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 (500-750 words/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 is based. Most importantly, the reviews should assess the strengths and weaknesses of the work under review.

Historiographical Essay

Students will write a historiographical essay, worth 30% 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/3000-3750 words; 12-point font; double-spaced), **due Wednesday, May 4 by 5:00 PM**, 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.

Oral Presentation

During the designated exam period for our class, **Tuesday, May 3, 3:30-6:20**, students will present the findings of their historiographical essays to the class as a whole in 7-10 minute presentations (with 5 additional minutes for questions), worth 10% of the overall course grade. The oral presentation should succinctly summarize the key arguments and debates identified in the student's historiographical essay, including the most important authors and titles, as well as the main contending schools of thought among leading historians. Students are encouraged to consult the University Speaking Center for assistance in this endeavor. Power Point presentations are encouraged but not required for the oral presentations.

Course Schedule

January 13: Introduction to the course: Discussion of David S. Mason, *A Concise History of Modern Europe: Liberty, Equality, Solidarity*, 2nd edition (Landham, MD: Rowman Little Publishers, 2010, ISBN: 9781442205345).

January 20: Discussion of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979, ISBN: 9780394740676), led by Group 1

January 27: Discussion of Bernard Lewis, *Islam & the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, ISBN: 9780195090611), led by Group 2

February 3: Discussion of Malcolm Crook, editor, *Revolutionary France, 1788-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, ISBN: 9780198731870), led by Group 3

February 10: Discussion of Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dryfus* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010, ISBN: 9780307266316), [led by Group 1](#)

February 17: Discussion of Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008, ISBN: 9780393331998), [led by Group 2](#)

February 24: Discussion of Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, ISBN: 9780199567324), [led by Group 3](#)

March 3: Discussion of Michael Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006, ISBN: 9780674022515), [led by Group 1](#)

March 17: Discussion of Lewis Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, ISBN: 9780801477218), [led by Group 2](#)

March 24: Discussion of Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York: Picador, 2007, ISBN: 9780312426521), [led by Group 3](#)

March 31: Discussion of Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine Under Nazi Rule* (Boston: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, ISBN: 9780674027183), [led by Group 1](#)

April 7: Discussion of Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009, ISBN: 9780674034594), [led by Group 2](#)

April 14: Discussion of Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009, ISBN: 9780674034655), [led by Group 3](#)

April 21: Discussion of Jeffrey Jones, *Everyday Life and the "Reconstruction" of Soviet Russia During and After the Great Patriotic War, 1943-1948* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2008, ISBN: 9780893573485)

Tuesday, May 3 3:30-6:20: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Historiographical Essays due Wednesday, May 4 by 5:00 PM