

HIS 218: The World in the Twentieth Century

Spring 2016 MWF 10-10:50

Classroom: MHRA 1214

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“One is astonished in the study of history at the recurrence of the idea that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over. We must not remember that Daniel Webster got drunk and only remember that he was a splendid constitutional lawyer. We must forget that George Washington was a slave owner... simply remember the things we regard as creditable and inspiring. The difficulty, of course, with this philosophy is that history loses its value as an incentive and example; it paints perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth.”

-W.E.B Du Bois, “The Propaganda of History”

Course Description

This class fulfills the General College Historical Perspective (GHP), Modern era (GMO), and Global non-Western markers (GN), and is cross-listed with IGS. The course examines 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 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 a “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 region—Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America—with a number of themes in mind: the Cold War; the rise & fall of communism; nationalism; terrorism; de-colonization/neo-colonialism; the international economy; racial, ethnic, and religious conflict; gender; class; and environmental issues.

Student Learning Outcomes

General College Historical Perspective (GHP) SLOs:

- Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives.
- Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing.

General College Global Non-Western (GN) SLOs:

- Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse global cultures.
- Describe interconnections among regions of the world beyond Great Britain and North America. (For GN marker, must include cultures, nations or sub-nationalities in the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands, or indigenous peoples around the world).

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

- Comprehend that history is not the memorization of dates and facts, but rather the *interpretation* of the past.
- Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods.
- Analyze the key terms, facts, and events in contemporary world history and thereby exhibit an informed historical perspective.
- Critically appraise varying historical arguments and clearly express their own interpretations.
- Critically read and distinguish between different types of historical sources and “read between the lines” of differing points of view.

Course Readings:

- Leah Chishugi, *A Long Way From Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide* (London: Virago, 2012; ISBN: 9781844086573).
- Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*(New York: Riverhead Trade, 2008; ISBN: 9781594483851).
- Online material identified below

Course Films: “Paradise Now” (2005); “The Official Story” (1985); “The Battle of Algiers” (1966)

Course Activities:

Two 3-4 Page Position Papers 15% each

Midterm Exam 15%

Participation 40%

Final Exam 15%

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; defend your argument by effectively refuting “the other side” of the issue.
- 3) Clarity of communication. You must present the evidence and express your argument in a clear, comprehensible manner.

A = excellent performance on all three criteria.

B = above average on all three, or excellent on some tempered by flaws in others.

C = average across the board, or above average in part but with significant flaws.

D = below average overall performance.

Exams: You will have a Mid-Term and Final Exam. They are take home and “open book.” Both will assess your ability to think critically about the material we have read/discussed and will take the form of short essays. Exams cover *only* the part of the course for which they are designated so they are *not cumulative*.

Participation: 30% of your grade will be determined by “participation.” It will measure your attendance in class, your level of engagement and contribution to class discussion/activities, and the quality of your discussion posts and group work.

We will use the following grading scale: 99 and above A+, 93 and above A, 90-92 A-, 88-89 B+, 83-87 B, 80-82 B-, 78-79 C+, 73-77 C, 70-72 C-, 68-69 D+, 63-67 D, 60-62 D-, 59 and below F.

Lecture & Assignment Schedule:

1/11/16: Introduction to the Course

****1st 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); [Basic Information on the Bomb](#); [“Second Guessing Hiroshima”](#); [“Hiroshima: Was it Necessary?”](#) by Doug Long; [A Petition to the President of the United States](#); [“The Decision That Launched the Enola Gay”](#) by John Correll; [“Diary Shows Tojo Resisted Surrender Till](#)

[End](#)” by Mari Yamaguchi; and [“The Day Hiroshima turned into Hell”](#) by Cajs Wikstrom; view the video clip [“Truman and the Bomb”](#) (23:15). Refer to the [Paper Guidelines](#) for further information regarding this assignment. **Due: January 25th.**

1/13/16: Truman and the Bomb

1/15/16: Discussing the Bomb (make sure to review the following readings prior to class):

Fussell, Paul “Thank God for the Atomic Bomb”

Blum, William “Hiroshima: Needless Slaughter, Useful Terror”

Long, Doug “Second Guessing Hiroshima”; “Hiroshima: Was it Necessary?”

Correll, John “A Petition to the President of the United States; “The Decision That Launched the Enola Gay”

Wikstrom, Cajs “The Day Hiroshima turned into Hell”

1/18/16: No Class MLK Jr. Holiday

1/20/16: First Paper Discussion

Bring a thesis statement and outline for your paper.

1/22/16: Origins of the Cold War

1/25/16: Stalinism in the USSR & the USSR after Stalin. **1st Paper Due in class**

[Excerpts from Stalin](#) by Hiroaki Kuromiya

[Speech by Soviet leader Andrei Zhdanov](#)

Speech by Harry Truman announcing the [Truman Doctrine](#)

1/27/16 and 1/29/16: No Class

2/1/16: India: the Struggle for Independence

Begin reading *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.

****Prompt for Response Piece 1:** Provide evidence from the novel to support one of these two arguments:

- This source shows that women had little or no power in Afghan society and that they were mere objects in the eyes of men.

or

- This source shows that women in Afghan society had a great deal of *informal* power and could at times manipulate the patriarchal system to their advantage. (Remember to refer to evidence from the book to address this question; 1-2 pages double-spaced). **Due February 12th.**

2/3/16: No Class

2/5/16: India: the Struggle for Independence (cont'd)

Excerpts from [*Mahatma Gandhi: All Men Are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections*](#)
compiled and edited by Krishna Kripalani

["Passive Resistance"](#) from Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule by M. K. Gandhi

2/8/16: Afghanistan: A Country in Turmoil

2/10/16: Afghanistan: A Country in Turmoil (cont'd)

2/12/16: Discussing *A Thousand Splendid Suns* **Response Piece 1 Due**

2/15/16: China: from Confucianism to Communism

2/17/16: Mao & China's "Constant Revolution"

2/19/16: Discussing Mao

["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

2/22/16: The War in Vietnam

2/24/16: Discussing the War in Vietnam

[Material on Vietnam](#) from Michael Hunt, ed. *The World Transformed*

Excerpt from [When Heaven and Earth Change Places](#) by Le Ly Hayslip

2/26/16: Mid-Term Prompt Distributed and Reviewed

2/29/16: View the Film *The Battle of Algiers* and read [Terrorism on Screen: Lessons from The Battle of Algiers](#)

Response Piece 2: Using evidence from the film, write a 1-2 page response to the following question:

In 2003, the Pentagon screened *The Battle of Algiers*. Why do you think this film was selected and do you think it offers important insight into terrorist insurgents?

3/2/16: Group Presentations

3/4/16: Group Presentations ***Mid-Term Due in class**

3/7-3/11/16: No Class- Spring Break

3/14/16: Iran: From Secularism to Fundamentalism

3/16/16: Discussing Iran and Fundamentalism in the Middle East

[“Excerpts from the 9/11 National Commission Report on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States”](#) (Chapters 7 & 10) and do the Internet Assignment [“What Would Muhammad Drive?”](#);

3/18/16: Persian Gulf Wars

3/21/16: Persian Gulf Wars (cont’d)

3/23/16: Do the Internet Assignment [“Reel Bad Arabs”](#)

3/25/16: No Class- Spring Holiday

3/28/16: The Arab Spring

3/30/16: The Arab-Israeli Conflict

4/1/16: View the film [“Paradise Now”](#) (2005) and read the [controversy over the film](#). Response 3: Using examples from the film, write a 1-2 page paper assessing the strength of the arguments over the film.

4/4/16: The Arab-Israeli Conflict (cont’d)

Begin Reading *A Long Way From Paradise* by Leah Chishugi; ****Prompt for Response Piece 4:** Which factor do you think played *the most significant role* in explaining the Rwandan genocide—tensions between Hutus and Tutsis, economic problems (i.e. the collapse of world coffee prices), or demographic/population issues—and why? (Remember to refer to evidence from the readings and lectures to address this question; 1-2 pages double-spaced). **Due 4/11/16.**

4/6/16: Overview of Africa & Genocide in Rwanda

4/8/16: Genocide in Rwanda (cont’d)

“Racial Reconciliation and Ethnic Hatreds” from *Sources of Global History Since 1900*

4/11/16: Discussing *A Long Way From Paradise* and Response Piece 4 due.

4/13/16: South America: Argentina

4/15/16: View the film [“The Official Story”](#) (1985)

4/18/16: Group Presentations

4/20/16: Group Presentations

4/22/16: **2nd Paper Due in class**—see [list of possible topics](#)

4/25/16: Final Exam Distributed and Reviewed

4/30/16: Final Exam Due