

# Understanding World History: From the Renaissance to Modernity

**Instructor:** Lucas A. Sprouse, MAHR

**University:** Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts

**Email:** [lucasAsprouse@gmail.com](mailto:lucasAsprouse@gmail.com)

**Term:** Fall 2017

**Credits:** 5

**Instruction:** English, including lecture and seminar

**Lessons:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 16:20-17:50 (90+90) in the Rorty Room

## Course Description

**Understanding World History: From the Renaissance to Modernity** is a survey of the major historical developments in society, politics, economics, religion, and culture from 1350 to the present day. This course will examine major movements including the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and major political ideologies that affected historical change. Central themes such as the birth of nation states, empire building, technological advancements, trade, nationalism, and globalization will play predominantly in this course.

Europe rose to global prominence during the Renaissance, planted colonies around the world during the Age of Exploration, and clashed ideologically during the Reformation and subsequent Counter-Reformation. Following the birth of nation states, empires rose and fell while science, technology, and trade transformed the world. Increased nationalism, among other factors, led to world wars and the Cold War era, and growing globalization continues to define the modern world.

In addition to lectures, discussion-based seminars will focus on primary and secondary source readings, and students' written and oral communication skills will be developed through essays and presentations. Along with increased historical understanding, students will cultivate better critical thinking and analytical skills that can be applied in a range of academic and practical settings.

## Required Readings:

### Secondary Sources

- James Reston, Jr., *Defenders of the Faith: Christianity and Islam Battle for the Soul of Europe, 1520-1536* (Penguin, 2010)
- Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History* (Westview Press, 2012)\*  
Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (Penguin Classics, 2000) **OR**  
Wenguang Huang, *The Little Red Guard* (Riverhead Books, 2013)

### Primary Sources

- Primary sources will be supplied throughout the semester (see class schedule)

## **Evaluation Criteria**

Active Participation: 20%

Presentation: 20%

Book Reviews: 30%

Examinations: 30%

**Active Participation:** It is absolutely necessary to come to class and participate on a regular basis.

Participation includes attendance, reading preparation, and active discussion during seminars. You are allowed four unexcused absences, after which your grade will significantly decrease. Absences on book discussion days count as two absences since these discussions are crucial to the course as a whole, you should not miss book discussion days unless absolutely necessary.

**Presentation:** Each class focuses on a different topic, as outlined in the *Class Schedule*. Each student should choose one of the topics that interests them and prepare a 45 minute presentation on this topic. This includes: 1) Presenting information pertaining to the topic you have chosen in the form of a lecture 2) Creating some sort of a visual aid to accompany your presentation 3) Creating questions from the assigned primary source reading for the day and 4) Leading a minimum 10 minute discussion. You will be graded on all four components of the presentation. Presentations dates will correlate with the topic's date in the *Class Schedule*; this means, for example, if you choose to present on the French Revolution and Napoleon, you will present on October 17. Once topics have been chosen, the instructor will provide topic specific guidelines. You MUST be present the day of your presentation.

**Book Reviews:** You will write three book reviews in this course, one on each of the assigned readings. These essays are due on the day of the book discussion and a hard/print copy must be handed in at the beginning of class. Book reviews should be around 1000 words (no less than 800, no more than 1200 words). More than a simple plot-summary, these essays must be analytical assessments. You should define the main argument(s) of the author, explain the purpose of the book, and provide your intellectual criticism of the text. Critical thinking must be evident throughout your book review. Why was this text written? How successful was the author at reaching his goals? What did you think of the text?

\*Specific chapters will be assigned from the *Industrial Revolution* text. Book reviews for the assigned chapters need only be 500 words, and will subsequently be presented to the class.

**Examinations:** There will be three examinations in this course, two midterms and a final examination. All three examinations are weighted equally. Each examination will cover the material since the previous one; the final examination will, therefore, not be comprehensive. Examinations will be based upon information from lectures, class discussions, primary source readings, the required readings, and any presentations given.

## **Course Evaluation**

A – excellent: 100-93%

B – very good: 92-84%

C – good: 83-74%

D – satisfactory: 73-63%

E – sufficient: 62-51%

Fx – fail: 50-0%.

## Class Schedule

September 12 Introduction and Humanism

- Course Overview and discussion on “What is history?”
- Lecture on Humanism
- **Begin reading *Defender of the Faith***

September 14 The Renaissance

- We will discuss the following reading: *Petrarch, Letters*
- Lecture on the Italian Renaissance and the Northern Renaissance

September 19 Islamic Empires

- We will discuss the following reading: *de Busbecq, Turkish Letters: A European Diplomat's Impressions of Suleiman*
- Lecture on the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal Empires

September 21 Exploration Eastward and Asian Isolation

- We will discuss the following reading: *Tokugawa, Edicts on Christianity and Foreign Contact*
- Lecture on Portuguese Colonization, Qing China, and Tokugawa Japan

September 26 Exploration Westward

- We will discuss the following reading: *Diaz del Castillo, The Spanish Encounter with Montezuma and Nahuatl Account of the Encounter*
- Lecture on Spanish Colonization, North American Colonization, and the Columbian Exchange

September 28 The Reformation

- We will discuss the following reading: *Luther, 95 Theses*
- Lecture on Luther's Reformation, Its Spread Westward, and the Counter-Reformation
- Book reviews on *Defender of the Faith* are due next week.

October 3 European Absolutism

- We will discuss the following reading: *Domat, On Social Order and Absolute Monarchy*
- Lecture on Absolutism in France and England, Crisis in the Habsburg Lands, and the Rise of Russia

**October 5 Discussion Day: *Defender of the Faith***

- **Book Reviews due at the beginning of class.**
- Be prepared to critically engage in discussion, attendance is vital.

**October 10 Midterm Examination #1**

October 12 The Enlightenment

- We will discuss the following reading: *Locke, Of Tyranny*

- Lecture on the Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment Ideals, and the American Revolution
- **Begin reading *The Industrial Revolution***

October 17      The French Revolution and Napoleon

- We will discuss the following reading: *Robespierre, Report on Principles of Public Morality*
- Lecture on the French Revolution, Napoleon's Rise and Fall, and the Congress of Vienna

October 19      Nationalism and the Birth of Modern Politics

- We will discuss the following reading: *Giuseppe Mazzini, Europe...On Nationality*
- Lecture on Nationalism, Conservatism and Liberalism, and revolutions in Latin America and Europe

October 24      The Industrial Revolution and Democratic Progress

- We will discuss the following reading: *Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor*
- Lecture on the Industrial Revolution, Its Spread, Democratic Activism, British Reforms, and US Expansion

October 26      The Age of Imperialism

- We will discuss the following reading: *Lin Tse-hsu and King Lobengula Write to Queen Victoria*
- Lecture on Imperialism in Africa and Asia, and Ottoman and Qing Pressures

Reading Week Break (no class, book reviews on *The Industrial Revolution* are due next week)

November 7      The Great War

- We will discuss the following reading: *Junger, Storm of Steel*
- Lecture on The Coming of the War, Its Turning Global, and the Search for Peace

**November 9      Discussion Day: *The Industrial Revolution***

- **Book Reviews due at the beginning of class.**
- Be prepared to critically engage in discussion, attendance is vital.

**November 14      Midterm Examination #2**

November 21      The Interwar Years: Russia and Asia

- We will discuss the following reading: *Lenin, Call for Peace/Decree on Land*
- Lecture on the Russian Revolution, the Soviet Union, China's Civil War, and Meiji Japan
- **Begin reading either *A Day in the Life* OR *The Little Red Guard***

November 23      The Interwar Years: The West

- We will discuss the following reading: *Mussolini, The Doctrines of Fascism*
- Lecture on the Great Depression, Interwar America, Britain, and France, and the Rise of Fascism (Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco)

November 28      WWII

- We will discuss the following reading: *Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary: Examination of Rudolf Hoess*
- Lecture on the Western and Eastern Fronts, the Holocaust, and the Pacific Front

November 30 Cold War

- We will discuss the following reading: *Churchill, Iron Curtain Speech*
- Lecture on Two Superpowers Emerge, the Korean and Vietnam Wars and Third World Countries,

December 5 Decolonization

- We will discuss the following reading: *Gandhi Discusses His Ideas*
- Lecture on Independence in India and Southeast Asia, African Decolonization, Israel and Conflict in the Middle East, and Latin American Independence

December 7 Democratic Struggles

- We will discuss the following reading: *Gorbachev, Perestroika*
- Lecture on African Obstacles to Democracy, The Collapse of the Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, and Reform in China
- Book reviews on *A Day in the Life* OR *The Little Red Guard* are due next week.

December 12 The Globalized World

- We will discuss the following reading: *To Be Announced*
- Lecture on Science and Technology, the International Economy, Terrorism and Global Security, and Cultural Syncretism

**December 14 Discussion Day: *A Day in the Life* and *The Little Red Guard***

- **Book Reviews due at the beginning of class.**
- Be prepared to critically engage in discussion, attendance is vital.

**December 19 Final Examination**