136-03A Europe in the Era of Total War, 1914-1945

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Europe in the Era of Total War: Why study history? This question has plagued philosophers, poets, and yes, even students, since time immemorial. History is the culmination of human knowledge; it is the bridge to the past; it helps us to understand who we are and why we are in our present situations even if it has proven a poor prognosticator for the future. But these explanations by themselves do not help us answer the question. You will discover in this class, if you have not already, that history is much more than rote memorization of names, dates, and places. It is ideas, beliefs, institutions, and much more. Beyond this, even, it is a way of thinking. To think historically requires critical reasoning, and because of this we will pay particular attention to primary sources including our two assigned texts, Darkness at Noon and the All Quiet on the Western Front. These primary sources are the foundation upon which all historical works are built. To think historically also requires us to defend our reasoning and share our ideas with others, so come to class prepared to discuss. In this class, there will be intensive concentration on the process of writing. Each of the assignments are designed to help you become better writers AND better thinkers.

Books: There are two assigned texts for this class and a recommended (but not required) textbook. The recommended textbook is Spencer M. Di Scala’s Europe’s Long Century: Volume 1, 1900-1945 (2012). The two required books are Arthur Koestler’s Darkness at Noon and Erich Maria Remarque’s All Quiet on the Western Front.

Office Hours: Office hours are designed to help you. If you are confused by the material, don’t understand or need help in any way on the assignments, or are encountering any problems dealing with this class, please stop by and see me or set up an appointment. I check e-mail regularly and will be using it as a primary means of communicating with you. My email address is PROFLARSON@YAHOO.COM -- DO NOT email me at my Xavier email if you want a timely response. Please note that I will not discuss any issues of grading over e-mail. My office hours are as follows:

Monday: 7:00-7:30 p.m. And By Appointment

Attendance: Ten percent of your grade is based directly on participation in classroom. This means that you will be graded on how well prepared you come to class and how much you contribute to the ongoing dialogue. However, the truth of the matter is that 100% of your grade is indirectly based on the discussions as all the material on the exams will be covered in class. Attendance will be checked, but merely coming to every class without contributing to class discussion will be rewarded with a failing grade for participation. If you skip without prior explanation you DO SO AT YOUR OWN PERIL.
Grading: There are no late assignments without PRIOR explanation. Period. Since this class is designed to teach you how to a) think critically, and b) write, you will be graded on both criteria. Which means that yes, spelling and grammar both count! Much more on the specifics of writing papers will be covered in later classes. The grading system breaks down as follows:

- Midterm Exam: 15%
- Final Exam: 30%
- Three Papers: 45%
- Discussion Section Grade: 10%

As you can see, you can't possibly hope to do well—or even pass this class—without doing moderately well in all three areas. And as mentioned before, the key to doing well is showing up for class prepared.

Assignments: There are three formal essays in this class.

Essays: The two papers topics are concerned with the two assigned books. Both of these papers (6 pages in length) deal with your critical analysis of these primary sources, and you will be required to utilize them in a coherent and effective manner. Proper documentation and grammar, clear and effective writing, and persuasive argumentation will be stressed. Additional information on each essay will be handed out in a timely manner.

Outside Essay: In addition to your two formal essays, you will have one essay based on one of the books listed on the attached Reading List. We will discuss this assignment in class.

Schedule: A comprehensive class schedule will be handed out in the second week of class. This will include all the readings required for each week. In addition to your texts, I will be handing out (either photocopies or over the internet) a series of primary source readings to supplement our materials.

Midterm Exam and the Final: There will be a midterm and a final exam. Make note of this and DO NOT MISS THESE EXAMS. In the highly unlikely case that you have a conflict, it is up to you to bring this to my attention well in advance of the exam date.

Other Notes: No recording of lectures. No use of laptops. No cell phones in class.

A SHORT NOTE ON INTERNET PLAGIARISM: Don't do it. I will catch you and will prosecute you to the fullest extent as outlined in the Student Handbook.

LET ME REPEAT THIS.
IF YOU CHEAT I WILL CATCH YOU AND I WILL BE RUTHLESS IN PURSUING ANY AND ALL MEANS WITHIN UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES TO PUNISH YOU, INCLUDING RETROACTIVELY FAILING YOU FOR THE COURSE.

I reserve the right to make changes, deletions, or alterations to this syllabus at any time throughout the semester.

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