

## INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION (HIS 150) (3 Cr)

Professor: Dr. Robinson-Dunn

Class meets TR 2:00-3:15 in B16

Office- Briggs 326, 993-1107 (a message may be left with the secretary in the Liberal Arts office outside of office hours, but do not abuse this privilege 993-1287)

Office Hours- TR 12:35-12:50 and 1:45-2:00, W 6:10-6:40 p.m. and by appointment

**Course description** – The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the methods through which historians do their work. We will focus on primary sources that shed light on aspects of western civilization from the 17<sup>th</sup> century until the present. We will explore the use of different types of sources such as letters, speeches, interviews, court records, government documents, treaties, imaginative literature, memoirs, and film. Students should have an understanding of the context, which will be provided through lectures each week, and the ability to think critically about these materials and analyze them from multiple perspectives in order to create well-written historical essays.

**Interpreting historical systems** – To perform this task, you must utilize two methods of thinking that go together in order to create a sophisticated historical interpretation:

1. Specific data about a given event, person, technology, etc.: dates, people, events, design characteristics, etc.
2. Interpretations of data: what does the evidence mean?

Do not leave data or interpretations out of your explanation. Simply throwing out interpretations (about the meaning of some design or event) without thinking about the available evidence is just arm-chair theorizing. To simply list historical particulars without the hard labor of interpreting what they mean is to push the subject into "factoids" or a list of random names and dates. You will hear of my interpretations and you will read those of other historians, but these are meant as helps and not as substitutes for your own thinking.

**Historical thinking** – Learning to think historically differs from learning mathematics or a language. A language is an already completed system that confronts you, the learner, as a whole. The "data" and "interpretations" are fixed in advance. To learn it you must submit yourself to that fixed system. The interpretations of historical evidence are not fixed. There are some intelligent interpretations already articulated by historians, but the work of interpretation is never finished. As a result, a better model for the kind of learning in this course is adult interaction with the evidence rather than submission to a fixed system. To that end, we will discuss these types of issues through what I like to call the "historians" toolbox which will discuss as the class proceeds.

**Class participation** – Historical learning and interpretation are acquired abilities. Yours should improve the longer you continue to work with a particular body of evidence or historical question. For that reason, a high value will be placed on your participation in class discussions. When you think you have spotted a flaw in my - or some other historian's - interpretation, risk the argument. Whether you change your mind in the process or I change mine or we continue to disagree, we all learn by the attempt. The class participation grade is *not* a warm body grade. In other words you do not get credit simply for being here. You must demonstrate that you have read and understand the material as well as contribute to classroom discussions. Also, you will have periodic, unannounced in-class writing assignments usually lasting for about 15-20 minutes. These will be based on the readings from Weber and the lectures. They will help you to practice organizing and effectively communicating your ideas on paper, which will help you on the exams. They will be considered part of your class participation grade. General attitude and demeanor count as well. Disruptive behavior, eating in class, and chronic lateness to and early departure from class will not be tolerated.

Students with disabilities must see me during the first week of class in order to make any special arrangements that might be necessary

**Grading** – The grade for this course will be based on class participation (25%), the mid-term (20%), the final exam (30%) and one paper (25%). In order to pass this class, you must take both exams and submit the paper.

**Required readings** – The required readings are listed below. The readings from Weber should be completed by the Tuesday of the week that they are assigned.

Please be advised that there will be no deadline extensions for the paper and no make-up exams except in cases of serious illness verified by a doctor's note. Your papers should be free of structural and grammatical errors. You should also have a clear introduction, thesis and conclusion. If you have any doubts about your writing skills, see the writing center before you submit your paper.

Required Texts: *The Western Tradition from the Renaissance to the Present* volume II, fifth edition edited by Eugen Weber (D.C Heath and Company, 1995) and Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*. Both are available in the bookstore.

Note: Some weeks you will be responsible for more reading material than others. Review the assignments well in advance and plan your schedule accordingly. You should begin reading Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* early in the semester. It will be the topic of your paper. It is recommended that you spend three hours reading and studying for every hour of class time.

### September

7-9 – introduction to the course and discussion of historical methods

14-16- the Scientific Revolution and political, social, and intellectual developments in the 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Weber: documents on witch hunting, 167-177 and Galileo, "What Is Scientific Authority?" 150-153

21-23 - the Enlightenment and the French Revolution  
Weber: Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, 144-149 and records of the French National Convention, 300-303.

28 – reaction to the revolution and the rise of Napoleon  
Weber: The Holy Alliance, 322-323  
30 – class will not meet

### October

5-7 - the Industrial Revolution and its impact on society  
Weber: David Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, 353-354 and documents on conditions in industry, 370-377

12-14 - Romanticism, nationalism, and unification  
Weber: poems by William Blake, 340-342 and writings of Joseph Mazzini, 389-394

19 - meetings with individual students to discuss papers

### **21- mid-term exam**

26-28 - Darwin and Imperialism  
Weber: Leonard Huxley on the debate between Huxley and Wilberforce, 454-457 and Arminius Vambery on Western influence in the East, 522-524

### November

2-4 - the rise of socialism and the Russian Revolution  
Weber: documents from the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, 554-560 and excerpts from Lenin's writings and speeches, 572-577

9-11- WWI and the 'Crisis of Modernity'  
Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*

16-18 - fascism and WWII

Weber: documents on National Socialism, 594-601 and debates regarding German aggression/ the Chamberlain-Hitler agreement, 607-618

23 – postwar Europe, decolonization and postcoloniality

Weber: George Marshall from the Marshall Plan, Dean Acheson on the North Atlantic Pact and the Treaty of Paris, 664-667

25 –thanksgiving break

### December

30-2- Europe after communism and using film as a historical source

**7- paper due**

7 – Review for final

9- individual/group consultation and review sessions

**17 - final exam 11:00-12:50**