HISTORY OF EUROPE TO 1648

Syllabus
HISTORY 101 – Fall 2009

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course surveys European history from its Mesopotamian origins until the mid-seventeenth century. During this period, European peoples developed complicated social, economic, and political systems while forging a unique sense of common identity. Throughout the course we will identify the major developments and changes in European society and analyze them historically. The instructor will encourage students not only to gain a familiarity with important individuals, events, and cultures but also to develop the ability to analyze and make sense of the historical record.

UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE OF ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE:
People make decisions in their lives (whether they are a peasant or a king) in a particular context. Karl Marx, a famous nineteenth-century social theorist once stated, “Man makes his own history, but he does not make it within the circumstances of his own choosing.” For example, if you or I were to decide to build a house today, we would certainly construct it according to our individual tastes, but we would also build it within a very specific context. We would be required by law to have a set of architectural plans drawn up by a licensed professional. Most of us would finance our new house through a bank and would have a contracting company build the house for us. We would, of course, include a plumbing system – sinks, toilets, garbage disposals, washing machines, and dishwashers – because those are rather standard features in our modern society. We would also build our house with the recent past in mind; if we were building in New Orleans, we would certainly want our house to withstand strong winds and we would want flood insurance. To further protect us from the bacteria all around us, we would likely install some form of water purification system, and we would arrange a garbage service to make sure our house was clean and safe. However, someone building a house in the mid-seventeenth century would construct his or her new home within a very different context. They would, for example, construct their house largely of wood because few other options were available. They would likely have no plans for the house, and unless they were very wealthy, they would build the house themselves. They would want to include adequate chimneys to allow smoke to escape from the fireplace (the only source of heat in the winter) and from the stove. They may well try to place the kitchen away from the main part of the house to decrease the risk of a fire started in the kitchen from burning down the whole house (a very common occurrence at the time – especially in cities). The bathroom would be placed outside the house (no plumbing, of course) and general refuse would likely be dumped in a river, probably the same river that was used for drinking. If we were peasants, as we likely would have been, we would have made the main room of the house big enough for the farm animals (you don’t want them to freeze to death if you depend on them for you livelihood) the children, and the parents to sleep in very close proximity.

While these may seem like very mundane considerations, the same sorts of contextual differences apply to all sorts of decisions. For example, in the mid-seventeenth century, politics and religion went hand in hand; therefore, if you were a Catholic noble, did you owe allegiance to a Protestant monarch that according to your faith was a heretic? If you grew up with the knowledge that sin caused illness, would you go to church if you became seriously ill or would you go to see a surgeon (who cost a great deal of money and often had few tools other than crude poisons and sharp instruments)? We think of ourselves as living in a rational period of history – we make logical decisions based on fact and science (an idea that originated in the enlightenment, incidentally). As you
cover the material for this course, however, I want you to try to understand how a rational decision changes depending on the context. The history of Europe is not the slow unfolding of truth down to our own time (much as we wish it to be), but a constantly changing environment where new decisions respond to the ideas and problems of the time. Thus, look throughout the course for situations, ideas, and events that change the context of European people’s lives, and how those changing circumstances altered the range of possibilities they saw in their present and future.

OFFICE HOURS: I will be available in my office, Bishop 319, every Monday from 9:00 to 10:00 A.M. and every Wednesday from 12:00 -1:00 PM, or by appointment. I will also check my e-mail (drspiech@olemiss.edu) very regularly, and I encourage you to ask me any questions you may have regarding the course, materials, assignments, etc.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the campus bookstore in the student Union):
1. Lynn Hunt et al., The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures, A Concise History: Volume I: To 1740, Second Edition

N.B.: Other required readings will be available on Blackboard.

ATTENDANCE: Students are expected to attend all lectures, to take notes, and to participate fully.

LECTURES: The lectures for the course will follow a main theme for each day. The lectures are intended to be general discussions of the day’s theme. They are NOT intended as a substitute for the readings, but rather as a way to help you sort through, organize and understand all of the materials for the course. In other words, while I will try to make the lectures as self-explanatory as possible, they are designed with the assumption that you are reading about the people, places, and events mentioned in more depth in your assigned readings. The readings should provide you with a great deal more detail on the topics covered in the lectures (with a few exceptions, where I will try to provide more material in the lecture) and will give you a broader context for the themes we address. Feel free to e-mail me or visit me in the office hours with any questions about things you are confused about in the lectures. Also, make sure to utilize your textbook (especially its index) to help clarify people and places that seem confusing or unfamiliar to you.

PARTICIPATION: Each day’s lecture will be interactive, and we will discuss themes as a group. Students are expected to actively participate by answering questions and commenting in class discussions. This portion of the course should not be onerous, but rather help you to better understand what you are learning and begin to think critically about the materials in preparation for your assignments.

ONLINE DISCUSSIONS: Roughly every 4 weeks I will open a new chat room with discussion topics relating to the readings, which I will moderate. Participation (by posting your own thoughtful comments about the topics) in the discussions is required for all students. Check the chat rooms on Blackboard for “Online Discussion 1” for more details and to begin participating. Each chat room will begin with a statement or question posted by myself to which you can respond (such as, do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?). You may also choose to respond to a classmate’s response that has already been posted (REMEMBER, make sure your comments remain respectful of your academic peers). Also, feel free to respond to other students’ responses to one of your earlier posts (again, in a respectful manner). Inappropriate behavior in the chat room discussions (such as mud-slinging, etc) will not be tolerated. There will be 4 discussions, and you must post comments for each of them DURING the weeks they are available. If your comment is only 1 or 2 sentences, you may need to post
multiple comments in a week to receive your full credit for that week. This portion of the class will enable us to engage in class discussions on the materials and help you to develop your own interpretations and views on major historical events.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT:** Students are required to write 1 short paper, roughly 5 pages in length. For the paper, students may choose from a selection of questions that will address the various themes from the course. This paper should develop your analytical skills as well as help prepare you for the final exam. You will be given ample time to write your paper, so I expect them to be thoughtful and well edited. I will be happy to look over and comment on any early drafts of your papers. Final papers should be submitted on Blackboard into the digital dropbox by 8:00 AM on November 30.

**QUIZZES:** Each of the short quizzes will test you on themes from the previous weeks’ lectures and readings. The questions will be short answer, and you will be given one hour to complete each quiz. The quizzes will be available on Blackboard for a forty-eight hour period so that you can choose a convenient time to take the exam. These quizzes are intended to help you keep up with the readings and lecture materials, and they should not be terribly difficult if you keep up with your readings.

**FINAL EXAM:** The Final Exam will consist of a combination of short answer and essay questions, which will test you on the major themes covered in the lectures and readings.

**PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Any student caught plagiarizing or cheating in any manner will fail the assignment (at minimum) or fail the course.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**
Blackboard Discussions: 5% each (4 discussions = 20% total)
Quiz I: 10%
Quiz II: 10%
Quiz III: 10%
Final Exam: 30%
Final Paper: 20%

A=90-100%
B=80-89%
C=70-79%
D=60-69%
F=0-59%

N.B. Grades will be posted on Blackboard

**Important Dates**
August 24 – Classes Begin
Sep 4 – Quiz I
September 7 – Labor Day
Oct 2 – Quiz II
October 5 – Last day to withdraw
Nov 6 – Quiz III
November 23-27 – Thanksgiving Break
Nov 30 – Final Paper Due at 8:00 on Blackboard
December 4 – Classes end
Dec 7 – Final exam at 8:00 AM for Section 4
Dec 11 – Final Exam at 8:00 AM for Section 1

Course Schedule

August 24-28 – Introduction and Mesopotamia
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 1

Aug 31-Sep 4 – Egyptians and Hebrews
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 2
    * QUIZ I – AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD FOR 24HRS BEGINNING FRIDAY AT NOON

Sep 7-11 – The Greek Polis
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 3

Sep 14-18 – The Greek Cosmopolis
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 4

Sep 21-25 – Roman Republic
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 5

Sep 28-Oct 2 – Roman Empire
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 6
    * QUIZ II – AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD FOR 24HRS BEGINNING FRIDAY AT NOON

Oct 5-9 – Early Christianity
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 7

Oct 12-16 – Byzantium and Islam
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 8-9

Oct 19-23 – Middle Ages I
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 10

Oct 26-30 – Middle Ages II
    * Read: * Read: Hunt Chapter 11-12

Nov 2-6 – Middle Ages III
    * Read: Hunt Chapter 13
    * QUIZ III – AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD FOR 24HRS BEGINNING FRIDAY AT NOON

Nov 9-13 – Renaissance
Nov 16-20 – Reformation
* Read: Hunt Chapter 15

Nov 23-27 – Thanksgiving Break

Nov 30-Dec 4 – Science and Discovery
* Read: Hunt Chapter 16
* FINAL PAPER MUST BE SUBMITTED ON BLACKBOARD BY 8AM ON MONDAY, NOV 30

FINAL EXAMS:
Dec 7 – Final exam at 8:00 AM for Section 4
Dec 11 – Final Exam at 8:00 AM for Section 1