

International History

Academic year 2020–21

Europe and the World: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Histories

HI130 - Spring - 6 ECTS

Wednesdays 8.15–10am, P3-506

(see below for detailed preliminary schedule)

Course Description

Throughout much of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, Europeans considered their continent the center of the world, supposedly superior to others. Buoyed by economic growth and overseas colonialism, European states and ideas indeed wielded significant power over other parts of the world, while mass emigration demographically Europeanized many places. While U.S. and later East Asian ascendancy have long since shifted the balance, history as an academic discipline is largely the product of that age of European primacy, imbibing the work of historians with a stubborn Eurocentrism of topic and of concept. This seminar contemplates and discusses the consequences of this state of affairs, as well as changes during the last decades. Is a non-Eurocentric history possible?

> PROFESSOR

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Office hours

Wednesdays 10–12

(online only this semester; see below for details)

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Tuesdays 12–2pm

Syllabus

Course Requirements

1. Term Paper: 55% of final grade; 4,000 words; deadline June 11, 2021 (by email to professor and TA)

Term papers of 4,000 words (including the footnotes, but excluding the bibliography) should deal with a clearly circumscribed topic, which can be either historical or theoretical, and address a viable research question. Topic and question should be related to Europe's historical role in the world, be developed by the student, and discussed in advance with the instructor. For this purpose, students must submit (by email, to professor and TA) a 300-word abstract by April 30, which states the title, topic, question, and structure of the future paper. This serves as a basis for discussion in the office hour. Once you submitted your abstract please make an appointment here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ECmV28YZOkGQrTE6_UVThlx8BmjIw2MfYvmGhN6Tzq4/edit#gid=0

Then please create an online meeting (Webex, Zoom, etc.) and send an invite to michael.goebel@graduateinstitute.ch

For general reference of how to write term papers, please read the guidelines (available on Moodle) carefully. Two sessions will be devoted to academic writing. When in doubt you can also refer to this online guide for writing academic research papers: <https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/index.html>

2. Book Presentation and Review: 25% of final grade; 800–1,000 words; deadline Friday noon before class presentation.

From the week-by-week list below you must choose one book to present in class and write a review of it. Book reviews are standalone pieces of 800–1,000 words, which should summarize the book's content (ideally not on a chapter-by-chapter basis, but as a whole), approach, and main arguments in relation to the wider historiography of the relevant topic. They should also contain explicit praise and/or criticism. For reference, please read yourself through the book reviews of the *American Historical Review* as well as prior reviews of the book that you pick. The reviews must be submitted to all course participants by Friday noon before your presentation of the book. Feedback on the written reviews will be provided in the office hour (ideally together with discussing your abstract, if possible).

The book presentation in class should be concise (7 minutes as an absolute maximum) and refrain from summarizing the book's content once more, which through your written review will be known to all course participants before your presentation. Rather, it should relate the book's arguments to the general required reading of the session in which you present the book. Does it support or complement the arguments made in the required reading? In what way? Does it shed a different light on them or contradict them? Your presentation should thus serve as an opener of the discussion rather than as a standalone review.

3. Class Participation: 20% of final grade

Just like an orchestra, a history seminar is only as good as the individual effort of all its participants. Please come to every class equipped with a thorough reading of the assigned texts, prepared answers to the questions that you find below for each session, as well as questions of your own. Make yourself heard in class and we will all benefit as a group.

Course Structure

The course begins with a three-session bloc concerning the question of how European, and thus how particular and universalizable the epistemological foundations of modern history as an academic discipline are. Starting from Dipesh Chakrabarty's famous, yet pessimistic indictment, and his impossible program of "provincializing Europe," we discuss postcolonial critiques of Eurocentrism and some critiques of the critiques. This is followed by a more topical bloc of two sessions concerning historical formations long regarded as quintessentially European: the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

1. Introduction (24 Feb, 8.15–10am)

Who are we? Distribution of presentations.

Methods and Techniques:

How to prepare and deliver a good presentation. The 5–7-minute rule, brevity, and precision.

2. Postcolonial Critiques of Eurocentrism (3 Mar, 8.15–10am)

Topic/Question:

In this session we will read a classic postcolonial critique of Eurocentrism in history, by Dipesh Chakrabarty, who is perhaps most famous for his call to "provincialize Europe." As his article reveals, the slogan is more easily bandied about than conscientiously implemented, especially if one wishes to avoid collateral damage to the disciplinary standards that academic historians have long cherished. Is Eurocentrism escapable? Or are we having the wrong debate about this, as Arif Dirlik claims? (Note that both articles, with their wide-ranging theoretical concerns, their philosophical inclinations, and their genesis in the academic debates of the 1990s surrounding

postmodernism can be heavy-going for the uninitiated. Especially Chakrabarty, however, is foundational for the postcolonial critique of Eurocentrism among historians, while Dirlik offers an idiosyncratic angle hopefully conducive to lively discussion.)

Required Reading:

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?" *Representations* 37 (1992): 1–26.

Arif Dirlik, "Is There History after Eurocentrism? Globalism, Postcolonialism and the Disavowal of History," *Cultural Critique* 42 (1999): 1–34.

Techniques:

Finding, Reading, and Writing Book Reviews

3. History Stolen / History Silenced (10 Mar, 8.15–10am)

Topic/Question:

In this session we read excerpts from another two classic books refuting the notion of European and/or Western uniqueness, this time both written by anthropologists. Goody is especially critical of teleological assumptions about Europe's supposedly singular path from feudalism to capitalism. Trouillot, on the other hand, focuses on how power allows imposing a certain vision of history, sidelining events such as the Haitian Revolution. How convincing do you find their criticisms? How much of it do you recognize in what you have been, and are being, taught about history?

Required Reading:

Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–9 ('introduction'); 215–239 ('The theft of Institutions, towns and universities')

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 70–107 ('An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-event').

Franklin W. Knight, review of Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 77(3) (1997): 483–484.

4. Where Was the Enlightenment? (17 Mar, 8.15–10am)

Topic/Question:

"The Enlightenment," in the singular, has long been a standard staple of high school curricula in Europe, but also elsewhere, which have mostly identified it as a quintessentially European, even West European, affair. More recently, academic historians like Sebastian Conrad have challenged this focus on Europe, arguing for a reinterpretation of the Enlightenment with a more global purview. Self-appointed "defenders of the West," such as Ricardo Duchesne, have not taken lightly to this challenge. (Note that the two articles we read this week come from very different academic and political quarters and should not necessarily be seen as structural equivalents. Duchesne retired from his university position in 2019, after more than 100 of his colleagues characterized his views as "racist and without academic merit." The debate, and the tone of Duchesne's piece in particular, may touch a politically sensitive nerve.)

Required Reading:

Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique," *American Historical Review* 117(4) (2012): 999–1027.

Ricardo Duchesne, “Multicultural Historians: The Assault on Western Civilization and Defilement of the Historical Profession, Part II: The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment,” *The Occidental Quarterly* 13(4) (2013-2014): 3–31 (read esp. 14–26).

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

David A. Bell, *Shadows of Revolution: Reflections on France, Past and Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Viking, 2018).

5. Why Did Europe Grow Rich? (24 Mar, 8.15–10am)

Topic/Question:

The economic history debate about the so-called “great divergence” between Europe and China essentially seeks to answer the question of why, considering roughly comparable standards of living prior to 1800, (Northwestern) Europe grew so much wealthier and more powerful during the nineteenth century, whereas China did not. David Landes has provided a succinct statement of an answer that was long standard. Kenneth Pomeranz, by contrast, has famously delivered a rather different answer to the same question—widely debated and also criticized, as in the review by Eric Jones. How persuasive do you find the three pieces and why?

Required Reading:

David S. Landes, “Why Europe and the West? Why Not China?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20(2) (2006): 3–22.

Kenneth Pomeranz, “Political Economy and Ecology on the Eve of Industrialization: Europe, China and the Global Conjunction,” *American Historical Review* 107(2) (2002): 425–446.

Eric L. Jones, “Time and Chance in the Old-World Economies,” *The Journal of Economic History* 60(3) (2000): 856–859. [Review of: Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000)].

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: Norton, 1998).

Prasannan Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600–1850* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

No class for one week

Easter Break

6. Essay Writing Class (13 Apr, 10.15–12)

To be taught together with HI 113, room to be announced.

Please read carefully the guidelines and come prepared to discuss specific matters that in your eyes arise from these guidelines.

7. Eurocentrism and International Law (14 Apr, 8.15–10)

Topic/Question:

This class begins a two-session interdisciplinary mini-bloc that interrogates the role of European origins, or Eurocentrism, of disciplines other than history; here international law. Purportedly designed to stay above the fray and any particularist (national or regional) interests, international law as an idea and practice nonetheless emerged in a context dominated by European power and notions of European supremacy. What are the long-term consequences of this birthmark?

Required Reading:

Anne Charlotte Martineau, “Overcoming Eurocentrism? Global History and *the Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law*,” *European Journal of International Law* 25(1) (2014): 329–336.

Martti Koskenniemi, “Histories of International Law: Dealing with Eurocentrism,” *Rechtsgeschichte – Legal History* 19 (2011): 152–176.

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

Arnulf Becker Lorca, *Mestizo International Law: A Global Intellectual History, 1842–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Andrea Bianchi, *International Law Theories: An Inquiry into Different Ways of Thinking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

8. Eurocentrism and World Politics (14 Apr, 2.15–4pm)

Topic/Question:

Following on from the last session about law, this class raises similar questions in relation to world politics and international relations. What does it mean, first for the structural set-up of world politics and international relations, and second for the academic disciplines concerned with their systematic study, that they both arose in a particular historical situation of European centrality?

Required Reading:

John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 1–30.

Brian C. Schmidt, “A Realist View of the Eurocentric Conception of World Politics,” *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 42(2) (2014): 464–471.

Torbjorn L. Knutsen, “Western Approaches,” *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 42(2) (2014): 448–455.

John M. Hobson, “Re-viewing the Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: A Response to Knutsen, Ling, Schmidt, Tickner and Vitalis,” *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 42(2) (2014): 485–514.

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2012).

Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

9. Writing the Margins into Global History (28 Apr, 8.15–10)

Topic/Question:

In this session, we move a little away from the theoretical and historical discussions of the preceding classes, into a more practical hands-on terrain of what ought to be done. Through the readings we encounter two very different models and propositions. The first comes from political theorist Loubna El Amine, who argues that we should replace the common West/East dichotomy with a focus on “modernity.” The second comes from economic historian Gareth Austin, who suggests “reciprocal comparison” as a way forward. How compelling do you find these propositions and why?

Required Reading:

Loubna El Amine, “Beyond East and West: Reorienting Political Theory through the Prism of Modernity,” *Perspective on Politics* 14(1) (2016): 102–120.

Gareth Austin, “Reciprocal Comparison and African History: Tackling Conceptual Eurocentrism in the Study of Africa’s Economic Past,” *African Studies Review* 50(3) (2007): 1–28.

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

Farah Godrej, *Cosmopolitan Political Thought: Method, Practice, Discipline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Peer Vries, *Escaping Poverty: The Origins of Modern Economic Growth* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2013).

10. How European Was the Bourgeoisie? (28 Apr, 2.15–4pm)

Topic/Question:

Among many others, one typical concept largely derived from European history, but long used as a central structuring element in historians’ thinking about the past, is “class.” What is more, there was even a class that in itself was allegedly quintessentially (Western) European: the bourgeoisie. Until not long ago, a good part of comparative history operated on the assumption that the historical trajectory of a given country largely depended on whether that country had *it*, or didn’t have *it*: the bourgeoisie. And, if not on much else, Marxists, liberals, and conservatives could all agree that *it* was very difficult to find outside of Europe. How tenable are these assumptions? And what happens if we dismiss them as outdated?

Required Reading:

Hartmut Kaelble, “Social Particularities of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe,” in *The European Way: European Societies in the 19th and 20th centuries*, ed. Hartmut Kaelble (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 276–317.

Christof Dejung, David Motadel, and Jürgen Osterhammel, “Worlds of the Bourgeoisie,” in *The Global Bourgeoisie: The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire*, eds. Dejung, Motadel, and Osterhammel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 1–40.

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Lucie Ryzova, *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in Colonial-National Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

11. Europe, Democracy, and War (12 May, 8.15–10)

Topic/Question:

“Democracy” is another phenomenon, however elusive, Europeans long prided themselves of supposedly having invented. After WWII, it also became something that Western Europe, though in alliance with and under the leadership of the United States, claimed to export to other parts of the world. Yet, as Mark Mazower underlined in the book of which we are reading the beginning for this session, the way to (Western) Europe’s postwar *trente glorieuses* was... well, neither consistently democratic nor especially peaceful. And in addition, there has always been Europe’s internal “other,” allegedly undemocratic and violent: the Balkans. What are we to make of all this for the larger question of Europe’s role in the world?

Required Reading:

Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999): ix–39. (‘Preface’ and ‘The Deserted Temple: Democracy’s Rise and Fall’)

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (London: Routledge, 2018).

Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

12. Postwar Europe’s Relationship with the World (12 May, 2.15–4pm)

Topic/Question:

Our final session takes us to post-WWII European unification and its implications and consequences for (Western) European relations with the non-European world, with a particular eye on European development policies in the wake of decolonization. In how far, and in what ways, were these policies underwritten by an earlier period of European colonialism, or rather signified a new departure?

Required Reading:

Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 231–267.

Michele Alacevich, “Planning Peace: The European Roots of the Post-War Global Development Challenge,” *Past and Present* 239(1) (2018): 219–264.

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Corinna Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

13. Theory from the South? (Class taught by TA, 19 May, 8.15–10)

Topic/Question:

Anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff’s *Theory from the South* (2012), and the discussions that followed it show how criticism of Eurocentrism might translate into novel approaches for study and research. In keeping with

last session's hands-on spirit, we will focus our discussion on what the Comaroffs might offer to our own research interests and projects instead of debating the finer points of the reading itself. To facilitate this, each student is required to write a short text reflecting on how any single idea or suggestion made by the Comaroffs, or by their reviewers, contributes to their own work going forward.

Written reflections of one freely written paragraph (up to 250 words) are due on Monday, 12:00PM (noon) before class. Please upload them to the designated Discussion Forum (Below).

Required Reading:

John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012): 1-49.

"Theorizing the Contemporary." (Commentaries on *Theory from the South* by Achille Mbembe, James Ferguson and Srinivas Aravamudan)

14. Wrap up Session (26 May, 2.15–4pm)