

Mr. Pannone

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Modern Western Traditions

Course Objective

This course will aim to heighten students' ability to see relationships and distinctions in European political, social, economic, and intellectual history. The study of history goes far beyond the mastery of content. The study of history is about developing critical skills that will serve students in college and as lifelong learners.

Objectively, this course will help students improve on the following skills:

- Time management, organization, and study skills
- Critical reading of primary and secondary sources
- Constructing and evaluating historical interpretations
- Essay writing and oral communication
- Cause-and-effect relationships
- Comparative analysis
- Making historical analogies
- Inductive and deductive reasoning

Course Description and Course Themes

This class will help develop an understanding of the main themes in modern European history, including political, diplomatic, intellectual, cultural, social, and economic history. The process of investigating and analyzing history involves critical analysis of various primary and secondary sources that help us unravel patterns and sequences that have their causes before them but their legacies ahead of them. One must remember, however, that even the most astute student of history will find it difficult to achieve total clarity and closure on many points as the perspectives, biases and perceived or real effects of history continue to challenge the idea of a straightforward continuum. Using a college-level textbook, this course begins with the Renaissance and concludes with the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany, and the crisis of global terrorism.

Themes

- The growth in power of the state and competition among nation-states.
- Individualism as a force for progress and its conflict with the demands of society.
- The impact of economic innovation on the standard of living and traditional ways of life.
- The struggle by women, workers, peasants, and ethnic minorities for emancipation and power.
- The dynamism and destructiveness resulting from Europe's quest for mastery of its natural and human environments.

Course Format

This course will be taught as a seminar, which means that each student will play a vital role in the learning process. As in most of my courses, there is a tremendous amount of discussion. In the traditional seminar, students are responsible for completing outside readings so that the interpretation of the literature can be

discussed for deeper analysis and understanding in class. I will provide critical content through lecture notes, but that process also relies on the previous reading and note-taking of the student.

Testing

Students will take objective exams covering material from the textbook, supplemental readings, discussions, and lectures. Each exam will be predominantly responses to essay prompts with some multiple-choice questions. Students will also write a minimum of four DBQ's and four thematic essays.

Class Participation

Participation is a critical element not just for class discussion but for a keener understanding of the topic at hand. Talking about a theme or certain content will assist you in remembering it, or more importantly, in determining that you do not have a full grasp of it and need to ask questions. Taking lecture notes, listening to colleagues intently and coming to class with reading notes are all a part of successful participation.

Content Checks

For many reading assignments I will give a short Content Check at the beginning of class. Occasionally, I may allow you to use your reading notes. This assignment will count as a homework assignment and is designed to encourage you to do the reading and to take notes. Also, it helps me understand what material may have been especially difficult and needs more time for review.

Paper Rewrites

Writing, as you well know, is an essential element in the educational process. It reflects the level of understanding and critical thinking one possesses on a certain topic. For most papers, I will allow students to rewrite it and earn a higher grade. The two grades will not be averaged – you will receive the better letter grade. Also, **essays that are associated with tests cannot be rewritten.**

Grading

The breakdown is as follows:

- ✓ 70% = Tests, Papers, Quizzes
- ✓ 30% = Homework & Participation

Within each category items will be weighted differently. For instance, a chapter test will count more than a quiz.

UConn Early College Experience

In order for you to receive UConn credit, you must pass the course with a C or above. This credit may be transferred to other universities and colleges. Please remember there is a \$25.00 fee. For more information, visit www.ece.uconn.edu.

Texts

Palmer, *A History of the Modern World*, 9th edition.

Sherman, *Western Civilization: Sources, Images and Interpretations*, 4th edition.

Course Outline

Weeks 1 & 2 - Introduction and the Later Middle Ages

Readings: Palmer, ch. 1 & ch. 2 section 5

Discussion Questions:

1. How did fief holdings develop? In what ways was this system a reflection of the Continent since the end of Rome?
2. How did revival of trade influence the growth of cities?
3. How did the political instability of the fourteenth century contribute to the decline of feudal society?

Weeks 3 & 4 - The Renaissance—includes humanism, the rise of the New Monarchs, and the age of exploration

Readings: Palmer, ch. 2 sections 6-8; Sherman, ch. 1

Discussion Questions:

1. What was literary humanism and what problems were faced by those involved in humanism?
2. In what ways was the Renaissance a new development, strikingly different from the preceding Middle Ages? How might these developments be seen had an evolutionary continuation of the Middle Ages?
3. How did political theory mirror characteristic of the Renaissance?

Weeks 5 & 6 - The Reformation and Religious Wars

Readings: Palmer, ch. 2 sections 9 & 10; Sherman ch. 2

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the most important differences between Catholicism and Protestantism in the sixteenth century? In what ways do these differences explain the appeal of each faith and the causes of the Reformation?
2. How might the Reformation be related to some of the intellectual and cultural developments of the Renaissance?
3. In what ways would it be accurate to describe Luther and his doctrines as more medieval and conservative than humanistic and modern?

Week 7 - Economic Renewal

Readings: Palmer, ch. 3; Sherman, ch. 3

Discussion Questions:

1. What factors best explain the West's overseas expansion?
2. In what ways was overseas expansion tied to the political and economic developments of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

Weeks 8 & 9 - Western European Leadership, the Development of East European Entities & Absolutism

Readings: Palmer, ch. 4, 5 & 6; Sherman, ch. 4 & 5

Discussion Questions:

1. In regards to the political and religious aspects to the turmoil between 1560 & 1660, which do you think were most important? What argument can be formulated that admits the importance of both aspects?

2. How might the rise of monarchical absolutism be related to the turmoil of this period?
3. Why might mercantilist doctrines be particularly appealing to seventeenth-century monarchies?
4. How does family life reflect broader social, economic, and political aspects of the seventeenth century?

Weeks 10 & 11 – The Scientific Revolution

Readings: Palmer, ch. 7; Sherman, ch. 6

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the main ways in which the science of the seventeenth century constituted a break from the past?
2. What were some of the main problems facing seventeenth-century scientists in making this break? How did they handle these problems?
3. How would you explain the occurrence of the Scientific Revolution in the seventeenth century rather than in the sixteenth or eighteenth century?

Weeks 12 & 13 – Politics & Society in the Ancien Regime and The Enlightenment

Readings: Palmer, ch. 8 & ch. 9 section 41; Sherman ch. 7 & 8

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways did competing groups and historical conditions put pressure on aristocrats who wanted to maintain their position and influence?
2. How do eighteenth-century assumptions reflect the nature of politics and society during the Ancien Regime?
3. What core of ideas and attitudes most clearly connects Enlightenment thinkers
4. What policies would an eighteenth-century ruler have to pursue to fit to the greatest degree the ideas and assumptions of Enlightenment thinkers?
5. What ideas and attitudes of Enlightenment thinkers do you think remain valid for the problems facing today's world? What ideas and attitudes no longer seem valid or appropriate?

Weeks 14 & 15 – The French Revolution

Readings: Palmer, ch. 9 sections 42-46; Sherman, ch. 9

Discussion Questions:

1. What seems to have motivated many of the revolutionaries, as revealed by the demands made prior to the French Revolution and the actions taken during the revolution?
2. What factors help explain why this revolution occurred in France, one of the most prosperous and powerful nations of Europe? What does this explanation add to the significance of the revolutions?
3. What might the monarchy have done to retain control and minimize revolutionary changes?
4. In what ways should the French Revolution be considered a middle-class revolution or a revolution of the notables?

Week 16 – The Napoleonic Era

Readings: Palmer, ch. 10; Sherman, ch. 10

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you explain Napoleon's rise to power and his effective exercise of it?
2. In what ways did Napoleon preserve and support the principles of the French Revolution? In what ways did he undermine these principles?

Week 17 – The Industrial Revolution

Readings: Palmer, ch. 11; Sherman, ch. 11

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you feel that industrialization should be considered a great boon, a mixed blessing, or a disaster for nineteenth-century Europeans?
2. In retrospect, what policies might governments have adopted to minimize the pains of industrialization? What factors acted against such policies?
3. In a debate over how industrialism should be evaluated, what would the arguments of middle-class liberals be? Of industrial workers? Of women?

Weeks 18 & 19 – Revolution, Nation-state Building & Imperialism

Readings: Palmer, ch. 12, 13 & 14; Sherman, ch. 12 & 13

Discussion Questions:

1. In a debate between liberals and conservatives of the early nineteenth century over how the French Revolution should be evaluated, what points would each side make?
2. In what ways might conservatives find Romanticism to their liking? What aspects of Romanticism might appeal to liberals?
3. What historical links are there between nationalism, the national state, and imperialism during the nineteenth century? How might all three be connected to industrialization?
4. In what ways have some of our perceptions of imperialism changed since the late nineteenth century?

Week 20 – Society, Thought and Culture 1850-1914

Readings: Palmer, ch. 15; Sherman, ch. 14

Discussion Questions:

1. How can one argue that the nineteenth century was above all a middle-class century?
2. What common elements are there among the various criticisms of the middle class, its ideas, and its lifestyle?
3. How would you explain the rise of Marxist and socialist ideas and movements during the second half of the nineteenth century?

Weeks 21 & 22 – Europe as World Power, War & Revolution

Readings: Palmer, ch. 16, 17 & 18; Sherman, ch. 15

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways was World War I an outgrowth of the major trends of the late nineteenth century? Why is WWI nevertheless often considered a dividing line between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?
2. What role did World War I play in explaining the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks' rise to power?

3. What was there about the causes and process of WWI that made the peace settlement at the end of the war so difficult?

Week 23 – Democracy's Victory, Instability & Depression

Readings: Palmer, ch. 19, 20 sections 101 & 102; Sherman, ch. 16

Discussion Questions:

1. Which developments of this time period are most closely related to the experience and results of World War I?
2. In what ways do the trends of the 1920s and 1930s support the argument that Western civilization reached its apogee between 1789 and 1914 and that starting with WWI it was clearly on the decline?

Weeks 24 & 25 – Democracy, Dictatorship and The Second World War

Readings: Palmer, ch. 20 sections 103-104 & ch. 21; Sherman, ch. 17

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you explain the appeal or relative success of authoritarian regimes?
2. Would you conclude that "totalitarianism" almost inevitably leads to violence and war, or rather that it happens to involve violence and war because of particular historical circumstances of the times? In this respect, should fascism be distinguished from communism?
3. In what ways do Italian fascism and German Nazism differ in theory and practice from liberal democracy? In what ways does Russian communism differ from both?

Weeks 26 & 27 – The Postwar World

Readings: Palmer, ch. 22, 23 & 24; Sherman, ch. 18

Discussion Questions:

1. To what extent could you give further support to the argument that Western civilization has been on the decline since WWI in comparison to the heights it reached in the nineteenth century? What developments might be cited to refute this argument?
2. How might one make an argument that the fundamental historical shift in the last two hundred years did not come with WWI but rather with World War II, as indicated by the consequences of that war and the developments of the postwar period?
3. Do you think the Cold War was caused primarily by developments related to World War II or by the ideological differences between Communist and non-Communist countries? Were there any ways in which the Cold War might have been averted?

Weeks 28 & 29 – The Collapse of Communism and the Post 9/11 World

Readings: Palmer, ch. 25; Sherman, ch. 19

Discussion Questions:

1. How, and why, have Europeans made unprecedented attempts to achieve greater unity, after centuries of division, since 1945? How successful have their efforts been?
2. What are the challenges presented by international terrorism since 1970? In a discussion of three or four specific events or movements, what are some of the commonalities and some of the differences between them?

3. On balance, what have been the three most influential changes in Western society since the end of World War II? What evidence causes you to select these and not others?
4. It is possible to argue that most of what is claimed to be new about recent years is not really so new, that it is just our impression that it is new because we have been living through it. How might this argument be supported? How might it be refuted?