

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Department of History and Art History

Europe in Crisis: 1914-1948
Autumn 2022

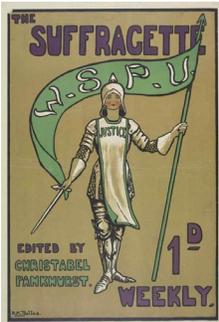
Course
HIST 309

Building/Hall
Blue Ridge

Room
129

Day
Mon-Wed

Time
Noon -1.15 p.m.



INSTRUCTOR:
OFFICE HOURS:
E-MAIL:

Dr Kevin Matthews
Online by appointment
cmatthe2@gmu.edu

REQUIRED TEXT and MATERIALS:

1. Brendon, Piers. *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s*
2. Gerwarth, Robert. *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End*
3. Kershaw, Ian. *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914-1949*
4. Overy, Richard. *Why the Allies Won*

(Note: Additional readings will be supplied by the instructor to students via Blackboard and the internet.)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (You are not required to purchase these books):

1. Beevor, Antony. *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (revised ed., 2006)
2. Bouverie, Tim. *Appeasement: Chamberlain, Hitler, Churchill, and the Road to War*
3. Kochanski, Halik. *Resistance: The Underground War Against Hitler, 1939-1945*
4. Macmillan, Margaret. *Paris, 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*
5. Figes, Orlando. *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*
6. Paxton, Robert O. *The Anatomy of Fascism*
7. Ullrich, Volker. *Eight Days in May: The Final Collapse of the Third Reich*

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

At the dawn of the 20th century, the major powers of Europe dominated much of the globe politically, militarily, and economically. Within 45 years, much of the continent lay in ruins. Some have explained this catastrophe by arguing that Europe was convulsed by a “civil war” that began in 1914, was interrupted by a 20-year armistice, or truce, and erupted again in 1939. By the end of this civil war, Europeans no longer were masters of their fate. That would now be determined by two outside powers: the Soviet Union and the United States.

From his own vantage point, Winston Churchill described these events as a new “Thirty Years’ War”. Indeed, the men and women who lived through these decades witnessed one of the most tumultuous eras of human history — an era punctuated by war, revolution, economic catastrophe, and genocide. Once mighty empires were shattered, their societies left in disarray, with the continent itself split between a communist east and a capitalist west, a division that would last for another 50 years

This course approaches these familiar events by considering them through the prism of a “civil war” waged under the banners of three competing ideologies: liberal democracy, Soviet-style communism, and fascism. Specifically, it will examine how this struggle affected the major European states: France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United Kingdom, along with lesser powers such as Austria-Hungary and Spain. The course will first chart the causes and course of World War I (“the Great War” as it is still known in Europe). It will then delve into the legacies of that conflict: the rise of fascism and Soviet-style communism, as well as the economic dislocation that made these violent ideologies attractive to so many Europeans. After considering the major events of the “20-year truce”, the years between 1919 and 1939, this course will examine World War II as the climax of the “European Civil War”. Throughout, it will take into account the on-again, off-again influence of the United States in European affairs.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES and EXAMINATIONS:

Varied, although the emphasis will be on lectures, classroom discussions, and readings. From time to time, these sessions will be supplemented with brief film excerpts which will also be the basis of discussion. Typically, I use what is called a “semi-Socratic” method of teaching. If you are prepared, your individual contributions to these discussions will lead to a more lively and interesting experience for everyone. On a more prosaic level, your participation in class will benefit your final grade.

GRADING SCALE:

Mid-term examination	25 percent
Research paper	30 percent
Final examination	35 percent
Classroom participation/attendance:	10 percent
Total:	<hr/> 100 percent

90-100 A - signifies **remarkable, outstanding** work showing complete mastery of the subject

A+	97 - 100
A	93 - 96.9
A-	90 - 92.9

80-89 B - signifies work that is **above the average** expectations for this course.

B+	87 - 89.9
B	82 - 86.9
B-	80 - 81.9

70-79 C - signifies work that meets **average** university standards.

C+	77 - 79.9
C	72 - 76.9
C-	70 - 71.9

60-69 D - signifies work that is far **below average** but which is passable.

59-below F - signifies failure.

I do not, and I will not, grade on a curve. Nor is it possible to offer extra credit work - for any reason. Students should instead devote their energies to the assignments laid out in this syllabus. If a student merits an “A”, that is the grade that he or she will receive. At the same time, I do not distribute grades based on some sort of percentage basis, meaning that only a certain number of students can earn an “A”, a certain number a “B”, and so forth. If every student deserves an “A”, that is the grade that each student will receive. Having said that, I again point out that “A” work as defined above is genuinely outstanding and shows complete mastery of the subject. While I hope that every student will strive to meet this standard, **it will not be easy to obtain such a grade.**

ATTENDANCE:

Because lectures and discussions are the foundation of this course, **attendance of class sessions is mandatory**. You are **personally responsible** for ensuring that you know the time and date of all assignments. Unless you have permission to take exams at the Testing Center, you are expected to take the mid-term and final exams when given to the class; students are not allowed to take exams at a time of their choosing. If you fail to deliver assignments on time or fail take the exams without a **documented excuse** (usually medical in nature), you will **not** be **allowed** to hand in late work or take a make-up exam. You will, instead, be given a zero grade without appeal.

Students should also be aware that they will be tested on material covered in class but which will not necessarily be found in the assigned readings — and vice versa. If a student **must** miss a class session, she or he should arrange to obtain class notes from a fellow student. **Lecture notes will not be provided by the instructor.**

It is important that each student stays ahead of the reading assignments for this course so as to be prepared for classroom discussions. **Failure to attend class on a regular basis** will make it extremely difficult to keep abreast of the course as it develops and can only result in lowering the student's final grade and, possibly, failure of the course. **Specifically**, final course grades for students who fail to attend class on a **regular basis** (as determined by the instructor) will **drop an entire letter grade** — without exception. This is beyond the 10 percent part of your grade covered by “classroom participation/attendance”. Valid excuses for missed lectures (again, usually medical in nature) should be in **writing**; verbal explanations will not be accepted.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION:

If you need academic accommodation, I am glad to help you. Please contact me about this matter immediately and contact the office of Disability Services (DS). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office at 703.933.2474. The website is: <https://ds.gmu.edu/>

MISCELLANEOUS:

The Internet - The instructor's E-mail addresses is at the top of this syllabus and I will check messages on a regular basis.

Cheating and plagiarism - **Either offense will constitute grounds for failing this course.** The university has a code governing academic ethics. Any student who is caught cheating on a quiz or exam or who plagiarizes will have his or her case sent to the Dean's office for adjudication.

It is a **serious academic offense** to plagiarize, i.e. to present the ideas, particularly the use of direct quotes, as if they were your own. This is particularly important when writing the term paper for this course and students should take care to properly cite work produced by others in footnotes. More serious still is the **presentation of a paper which has been acquired via the internet**. Cases of this nature will be immediately submitted to the Dean's office.

Classroom decorum - Students are expected to **show up for class on time** and, once in class, to **remain for the entire session**, except in case of dire emergency. Arriving late or leaving in the middle of a lecture is **disruptive and disrespectful** to your fellow students. Those who violate this rule can expect to receive a lower course grade.

Use of lap-top computers and audio-recorders - The use of lap-top computers and any other such devices (e.g., Tablets) is **banned** from these sessions. You should, instead, **use paper and pen or pencil** for taking lecture notes. If you are unable to do so because of a medical disability, you **must provide** documentation, usually in the form of a **doctor's letter**, to be exempted from this ban. You may record lectures if you wish but only after consulting with me, first.

There is a growing body of evidence that using pen and paper to take notes is actually a better way to learn. (See, e.g., Susan Dynarski, "Laptops are Great. But not During a Lecture or a Meeting", *New York Times*, 22 Nov 2017:

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html?_r=0

Pagers and cell phones are to be **turned off** at the beginning of each class. Failure to do so will harm your course grade. Any attempt to use unauthorized devices during an examination will be grounds for failing the course. You are welcome to bring drinks to class. However, **eating** during lectures and exams is **forbidden**. Put another way: **I don't lecture in your kitchen; don't eat in my classroom.**

University resources - George Mason University offers a range of services to assist students in achieving their academic goals and you are encouraged to make use of them. Among them are:

* COUNSELING CENTER - 703-993-2380 <https://www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc/>

* WRITING CENTER - 703.993.1200 <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

RESEARCH PAPER - Analyzing the "European Civil War":

Asked about the early years of the 20th century, Stephen Ambrose (the American historian who wrote, among other books, *Band of Brothers*) once told an interviewer:

You had a European civil war that began in 1914. There was a long armistice in that war. It finally comes to an end in 1945. In the process of coming to an end, what happens is that sweeping into Europe from the outside are the Russians and the Americans — with the result that no European nation wins the European civil war. The winners of the European civil war are in fact outsiders, the Russians and the Americans — most of all the Americans.

All students taking **this course for credit are required** to write a **10- to 12-page** analytical paper covering one aspect of the European Civil War. It is important that you understand what this paper is not. First, it is **not** to be a simple **narrative paper**. Nor should it be a mere summary of the books on which your paper is based.

Your assignment is to **analyze** a policy, event, or particular incident by addressing questions such as: How or why did this particular policy or event come about; what were the ramifications of the incident being discussed; why did a particular person, or party, or other set of actors take the decision or action being analyzed? Were there other options? Were the results those expected or hoped for? Or, was the outcome unexpected, possibly even disastrous, for those involved?

Nor is this an exercise in writing counterfactual history. While you might consider alternatives to, say, a policy that was carried out, it is important that you only go as far as the evidence allows when making these determinations. You are **not** writing “what if” history.

Your paper is to be based on at least three of the following sources: the books assigned for this course (Brendon’s *Dark Valley*; Gerwarth’s *The Vanquished*; Kershaw’s *To Hell and Back*; Overy’s *Why the Allies Won*); the assigned excerpts (see the syllabus calendar); one or more of the recommended books also listed above. You may **not, under any circumstances**, introduce other sources for writing this paper. The place to start with this assignment is by getting the required books as soon as possible & then start combing through them for ideas.

While this somewhat limits the range of topics to write about, the good news is that this means you will not have to do any additional reading beyond what is assigned for this course. There are a number of options to consider for this assignment, & each student’s selection should be unlike those of his or her fellow students. At the same time, you should make sure that your topic can be examined within the 10- to 12-page requirement. It should not be so broad that it cannot be analyzed, but neither should it be so narrow that your paper is repetitive. For your benefit, I **require** that you arrange a **Zoom session** with me to discuss paper topic ideas. The sooner this is done, the better. Your selection must then be submitted as a typed, one-page memorandum on 8 ½" by 11" paper **no** later than **18th of September**. I require **both** a **printed copy and a copy sent via E-mail** by that date. One **will not** substitute for the other. A sample memorandum is given here:

Paper Proposal for HIST 309/001

{STUDENT’S NAME}
{STUDENT’S E-MAIL ADDRESS}
{DATE}

Leni Riefenstahl created some of the most innovative and controversial films of the 20th century. As a woman film maker in a male-dominated profession, her chances of success in this field were slim. One powerful man, however, promoted her career: Adolf Hitler. Young and in awe of the circumstances in which she found herself, Riefenstahl was at the center of the Nazi propaganda machine where she created films such as *Triumph of the Will*, *Olympia*, and *Day of Freedom - Our Armed Forces*. This paper will explore the turbulence surrounding Riefenstahl’s career to answer the following questions: What role did Riefenstahl play in promoting the Nazi regime? Should she be viewed as personally culpable in advancing Hitler’s policies? Or, can her work be considered from a purely artistic perspective?

Your analytical paper must be typed, paginated, with margins of **no more than one inch**, double-spaced and **footnoted**; other citations — e.g., endnotes, MLA style, etc. will **not be accepted**. Your paper also must include a **bibliography** of the sources cited or referred to in your paper. If you use alternative citations or fail to include a bibliography, your papers will be returned to you ungraded, and your subsequent grade for the assignment will be lowered by a full letter grade. A guide on footnotes and bibliographies will be issued shortly.

Students may include **prints, charts**, etc., but **only** if they directly advance your argument. Nor should they be used as a substitute for your text. If you include a chart that takes up half a page, for instance, that half page will not count toward the 10- to 12-page requirement.

It is expected that your papers will be free of factual, spelling, and grammatical errors. For this reason, I urge students to purchase and use Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. This reliable, inexpensive guide will save you from numerous errors both now and in the future and is well worth having. Needless to say, it is the student's responsibility to submit a correct, legible copy of his or her paper. Unfortunately, some students are tempted to obtain research papers from the internet. To prevent that happening, and to protect other students who play by the rules, **I reserve the right** to ask students to **supply all notes, evidence of research, and drafts of their work** should a question of authorship arise.

Below are some **general** topic ideas to use as a starting point in this process. These suggestions are by no means complete and **students are allowed, indeed encouraged**, to present alternative topics:

France: The Great War's impact on French society & politics; French aims at the Paris Peace Conference; "Going it alone" — the legacy of the French occupation of the Ruhr; The goals of the Popular Front; France during the Great Depression; Maginot mentality — the Allies try to re-fight World War I; "Strange Defeat" — why France did not carry on the war in 1940; Marshall Philippe Pétain and his Vichy regime; French resistance to Nazi occupation — fact or fantasy?

Great Britain: "Rule, Britannia"? — how the Great War undermined British power; Ramsay MacDonald's quest for a prosperous Europe; Imperial sunset — Churchill returns Britain to the gold standard; Thwarting democracy — the formation of Britain's 1931 "National Government"; "Safety First" — Stanley Baldwin and the origins of British appeasement; For the woman he loved — Britain's abdication crisis; Alone — Winston Churchill's battles appeasement; "Peace in our time" — Britain abandons Czechoslovakia, 1938; Why Britain carried on in 1940; The importance of Lend-Lease; Uneasy allies — Britain & the United States; Creating the welfare state.

Russia/Soviet Union: The course and legacy of Russia's 1917 revolutions; the Allied intervention in Russia's Civil War; Enabling a dictator: the rise of Josef Stalin; Modernizer or mass murderer — Stalin's economic policies; Harvest of tears — Stalin's Five-Year Plans; the impact of the purges on the Red Army; Mission to Moscow — the Anglo-French failure to form an anti-Nazi alliance with the Soviet Union; The impact of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact; Allied betrayal? — the Warsaw Uprising, 1944.

Italy: Killing ambitions — Italy at the Paris Peace Conference; Fascist myth — Mussolini's "March on Rome"; How "fascist" was Fascist Italy?; The League of Nations' failure to stop Mussolini's takeover of Ethiopia; Italy's role in World War II; The death of Mussolini ... the death of fascism?

Germany: Berlin's long-term aim to control eastern Europe; Rosa Luxemburg and Germany's Spartacist rising — a revolution too soon?; Unholy alliance — Weimar and the *Freikorps*; Erich Ludendorff & the Nazis; German anti-Semitism & the seeds of genocide; How Nazi economic policies changed Germany; The impact of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact; His first big mistake — Hitler's failure to defeat the British in 1940; What "unconditional surrender" meant to the German people; Ashes of defeat — Germans lose a second world war; Answering the "German Question" — Allied occupation and partition.

Spain (In this case, most of your options will revolve around the Spanish Civil War): The rise of fascism in Spain; "Non-intervention" — the West and the Spanish Civil War; Guernica — portrait of an atrocity; Funding fascism — American aid to Franco, 1936-39; Fighting back — the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War; "Homage to Catalonia" — George Orwell in the Spanish Civil War.

The Balkans, central & eastern Europe: How the Treaty of Versailles destabilized eastern Europe; Poland as a factor in European politics; Bela Kun's failed communist revolution in Hungary; "Miracle on the Vistula" — the consequences of Poland's defeat of the Red Army in 1920; Murder in Vienna — the impact of the assassination of Engelbert Dollfuss; Allied betrayal? — the Warsaw Uprising, 1944; The Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe, 1945.

General: The rise of Europe's workers' movement; The Great War I as the "seminal catastrophe of the 20th century"; "Stalemate" — the legacy of trench warfare; The impact of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points; "Peace too soon?" — ending the war in November 1918; Ethnic cleansing — the treatment of refugees after 1918; Private diplomacy and public policy — the struggle over war debts & reparations; The origins of the Scandinavian welfare state; Allied reaction to reports of the Holocaust; Creating a new world — Versailles versus Potsdam; Ethnic cleansing — comparing government policy after the two world wars; Learning from the past — America policy toward Europe, after the two world wars.

IMPORTANT DATES and READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1 22 - 26 August **The road to Armageddon: Origins of the Great War**

[The world turned from a] ... *calm, innocent, measured way of living to blood and tears, to mass insanity, and to the savagery of daily, hourly, legalized, rewarded slaughter.*

- Boris Pasternak, Russian poet and novelist

22nd - 1st - **First meeting of HIST 309/001**

Readings: Kershaw, Preface, Introduction, chp 1; Gerwarth, Introduction; Churchill, "Old World at sunset"; Keegan, "A European Tragedy"; Brooke, "Peace"

Week 2 29 August - 2 September **Stalemate: Trench warfare and the home front**

Mother, if God spares me to get home safe, I will have something awful to tell you.

- Herbert Beattie, British soldier at the Battle of the Somme

Readings: Kershaw, chp 2; Keegan excerpts on Gallipoli, Verdun; the Somme; McCrae, "In Flanders' Fields"; Shaw-Stewart, "Untitled"

Week 3 5 - 9 September **Toward exhaustion: The Great War ends**

We laughed when they told us that the war was over, because we were the war.

- Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz, German *Freikorps* officer

5th - **Labor Day holiday**; classes do **not** meet, today

Readings: ; Gerwarth, chp 4-5; Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”

Week 4 12 - 16 September **A new world order: the Treaty of Versailles**

They think they have got peace, when all they have got is a twenty-year truce.

- Attributed to French Field Marshal Ferdinand Foch

14th - **Last day** to submit a printed copy of your term paper proposal

Readings: Brendon, Introduction and chp 1; Gerwarth, chp 11-13, 15; Kershaw, chp 3; Woodrow Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” (for reference, only)

Week 5 19 - 23 September **Why Lenin? Why Stalin? - Russia and Bolshevism**

The dictatorship of the Communist Party is maintained by recourse to every form of violence.

- Leon Trotsky, Bolshevik leader

Readings: Gerwarth, chp 1-3, 6-7; Brendon, 10, 19

Week 6 26 - 30 September **A world in torment**

Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently.

- Rosa Luxemburg, German revolutionary

Readings: Gerwarth, chp 8-10 and Epilogue; Kershaw, chp 4

Week 7 3 - 7 October **“Il Duce!” - Explaining fascism**

He is the greatest figure of our age. Mussolini ... will dominate the 20th century as Napoleon dominated the early 19th.

- Lord Rothermere, British press magnate

5th - **Mid-term examination for HIST 309** (tentative)

Readings: Gerwarth, chp 14; Brendon, chp 2, 6; “Fascism – 7 themes” (summary)

Week 8 10 - 14 October **The challenge of the Great Depression**

[Asked if there was any historical parallel to the Great Depression:] *Yes. It was called the Dark Ages, and it lasted 400 years.*

- John Maynard Keynes, British economist

10th - **Columbus Day holiday**; Monday classes meet on Tuesday

11th - HIST 309 **will meet** on **Tuesday**, the 11th

12th - **Mid-term examination for HIST 309**

Readings: Brendon, chp 3, (4 - skim), 8, (9, 11 - recommended); Kershaw, chp 5

Week 9 17 - 21 October **Adolf Hitler's will to power**

This was but a prelude; where books are burnt, humans will be burnt in the end.

- Heinrich Heine, German poet [written in 1820]

Readings: Brendon, chp 5, 12; Kershaw, chp 6

Week 10 24 - 28 October **France in despair**

No government can remain stable in an unstable society and an unstable world.

- Leon Blum, French premier

Readings: Brendon, chp 7, 14; Kershaw, chp 7

Week 11 31 October - 4 November **"Guilty men" — the origins of appeasement**

As the clever hopes expire / Of a low, dishonest decade.

- W.H. Auden, English poet

Readings: Brendon, chp 13, 17, (18 - recommended), (20 - recommended), 21-24

Week 12 7 - 11 November **Civil War in Spain**

It was in Spain that men learned that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can defeat spirit, that there are times when courage is not its own reward. It is this, no doubt, which explains why so many men, the world over, feel the Spanish drama as a personal tragedy.

- Albert Camus, French writer

Readings: Brendon, chp 15-16

Week 13 14 - 18 November

Triumph of evil: the early years of World War II

What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over; I expect the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization.

- Winston Churchill

Readings: Brendon, chp (25 - recommended), 26, Conclusion; Kershaw, chp 8; Overy, Preface, Author's Note, chp 1-2

Week 14 21 - 25 November

A "close-run thing": Victory in Europe

The refusal of the British and Russian peoples to accept what appeared to be inevitable defeat was the great factor in the salvage of our civilization.

- George C. Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff

21st - **Last day** to submit an **analytical paper** (NOTE: papers may be submitted earlier than this date - but **no papers will be accepted after this date for any reason whatsoever.**)

23rd - 27th - Thanksgiving break; **HIST 309** will **not** meet on Wednesday, the 23rd

Readings: Overy, chp 3-7

Week 15 28 November - 2 December

End? No, beginning

You make progress slowly. And nothing is won forever unless you fight for it.

- Ruth Davidow, American nurse in the Spanish Civil War

30th - **Last meeting of HIST 309/001**

Readings: Gerwarth, Epilogue; Kershaw, chp 9-10; Overy, chp 8-10, Epilogue; Sassoon, "Aftermath"

Week 16 7 - 14 December

Final exam period

Hist 309/001 Monday

12th December

10.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT MODIFICATION DEPENDING UPON UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.