



Europe in the Long Twentieth Century

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

HIST 4433/5433

Fall 2024

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. John Ashbrook

Office: 215 O'Donohoe Hall

Office hours: W: 1-2pm; TR: 10:30am-12:30pm; or by appointment

Office Phone: (940) 397-4153

Cell Phone: (434) 386-1750

E-mail: john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to provide the student with an understanding of the history of European society, politics, and diplomacy during the long 20th century. It covers the Congress of Berlin in 1878, World War I, the interwar years, the rise of the dictators, World War II, the post-World War II era (Cold War), the fall of communism, and the growth of the European Union. It analyzes the changing nature of Europe through a critical examination of the social, political, and intellectual movements of the long 20th century, as well as the diplomatic and military consequences these movements sparked. European affairs during this period are filled with controversy, and some of the events we examine will force us to confront fundamental questions of human nature and morality.

Unfortunately, a one-semester course cannot hope to give adequate attention to every significant aspect of this dense and complex history, even assuming we could agree on what was 'significant'. Therefore, I will not present you with a chronological survey of 20th-century European history. Instead of building a single grand narrative running from roughly 1871 to the present, we will be looking at history from a number of vantage-points and through a number of themes from different perspectives.

Objectives

The course objectives are simple and clear. First, the student will be expected to learn a general timeline of European history in the 20th century, focusing on major events and personalities (this doesn't mean memorization of dates, but instead a general knowledge of what things happened before

others and how these events influenced those that followed). A solid knowledge of facts is essential before more complex historical problems can be explored and analyzed. Much of this will be the student's responsibility since the lectures and discussion will deal mostly with themes or events of great importance during the timeframe in question. After completing this course, the successful student will be able to:

- 1) discuss the historical and international consequences of the twentieth century's two world wars;
- 2) identify the overt and underlying forces in twentieth-century European culture, society, politics, and science and technology that led to the decline of multinational empires, European wars and the rise and fall of totalitarianism, the Cold War and the collapse of communism;
- 3) discuss the transformation of the bourgeoisie, the urban working classes, and the rural population over the course of the century;
- 4) argue how and why Europe went from the dominant force in shaping the global order through empires to a junior partner of either the Soviet Union or the United States after the Second World War; and
- 5) understand the experiment of "uniting Europe" and the various visions of this project, including the Euroskeptical position critical of this process.

Student Participation

Students will be held personally responsible for their own education. I am a harsh taskmaster and do not accept excuses that tend to be pervasive in today's society. You are adults, and with age comes responsibility for your own actions or lack thereof. **Active student participation** in learning (which includes careful reading of ALL assignments, classroom engagement, attentive note taking, and participation in discussions), the maintenance of a weekly study schedule, the completion of ALL assignments in a timely manner, adequate preparation for exams, and, when necessary, individual post-exam consultation with the instructor, is essential to meeting the learning outcomes of the course. However, if you turn in all assignments, pass your exams, and participate in discussions, you are not guaranteed a "good grade". A is a designation of superior work, and B of good work. If your work ethic, written work, and test taking efforts are merely satisfactory, you will EARN a C. The bare minimum earns a D. All assignments **MUST** be turned in to achieve a passing grade.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Felix Gilbert and David C. Large, *The End of the European Era: 1890 to the Present*, ISBN: 9780393930405

Leslie Derfler and Patricia Kollander, eds., *An Age of Conflict*, ISBN: 9780155063587

Online Readings: As assigned

Readings for the week **MUST BE DONE** by the beginning of the first class for that week

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Notice: Understand the following – it applies to all assignments, **including drafts of papers**. If you, in any instance, “cut and paste” from any source without citing that source (plagiarism) or use **unapproved internet sources**, you will fail the course, including if you cheat in any way on a **draft**. Plagiarism of any kind will result in the same penalty. Ignorance of this policy and the university’s policy on academic dishonesty is NOT an excuse. Be warned, this includes, but is NOT LIMITED to, use of an **AI program** for **any reason**; plagiarism of any form; having someone else do any of the work (research or writing), etc. Depending on the severity of the offense, the professor reserves the right to employ any or all university sanctioned disciplinary actions, of which I will pursue prosecution to its furthest extent. I will drop you from the course and report the incident to the Student Affairs and any other office as per the university’s policy.

AI Policy

Under no circumstance should a student use AI as a generative or editorial tool for any assignment in this course. I will run all assignments through multiple AI checkers to determine whether or not AI was used. If there is any evidence of AI usage, the student will automatically fail the assignment in question. If AI is used on more than a single assignment, the student will fail the course. **DO NOT USE AI!**

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student’s studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Table 1: Percentages for each assignment (undergraduates).

Assignments	Percentage
2 exams 20% each. Take home, essay exams. First exam due on October 12 and the final exam is due on Dec. 9, both by 5pm.	40

Assignments	Percentage
Analytical Book Review. Book must be approved by September 9. Approximately 1200 words. Due on October 21 by 5pm.	20
Active Participation and Attendance – may include pop-quizzes, summaries, and in-class assignments	20
Final Research Paper on topic approved by professor by September 16. Between 3300 and 4000 words. Due on Dec. 2 by 5pm.	20

Table 2: Percentages for each assignment (graduates).

Assignments	Percentage
2 exams 20% each. Take home, essay exams. First exam due on October 12 and the final exam is due on Dec. 9, both by 5pm.	40
Analytical, comparative Book Review. Books must be approved by September 9. Approximately 1500-1800 words. Due on October 21 by 5pm.	20
Active Participation and Attendance – may include pop-quizzes, summaries, and in-class assignments	20
Final Research Paper on topic approved by professor by September 16. Between 4500 and 5400 words. Due on Dec. 2 by 5pm.	20

Table 3: Percentages for each letter grade for assignments and course.

Grade	Percentage
A	90% and above
B	80% to 89%
C	70% to 79%
D	60% to 69%
F	Less than 60%

Assignments

All assignments will be turned in to D2L dropboxes in WORD FORMAT ONLY. NO PDF OR GOOGLE DOCS will be accepted. ****Assignments and exams are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!!***

Exams

There will be two essay/short answer exams that are already up on D2L. All exams will be in the same format and have an equal percentage (20%). You must cite your sources (not the lecture) and use two or more credible resources for EACH answer beyond your textbooks.

Book Review

The book review may be a new exercise to some in the class. This is **NOT a book report**. Reviews are **critiques** of books in which the reviewer identifies the main thesis and the points the author uses to prove the argument. Once this is done, the reviewer critiques the book (is the argument believable, well researched, persuasive, well written). Does the author fulfill his or her stated or implied purpose? Is the argument subtle or ham-fisted? I will provide a “how to” sheet with a barebones description of how to do a short academic review. I suggest you use review essays from an academic journal (such as the *American Historical Review*) to get a feel for what they are meant to do. You might be asking yourself, “why do I have to do this? I don’t intend to be a professional historian [or] I won’t ever take another course in this department.” Every academic field requires such critical exercises; furthermore, you may take a position after college in which the boss wants you to critique something in writing. This review will give you practice doing a formal critique. We will spend class time talking about and practicing analytical writing and the book review itself.

The book(s) you select to review **CANNOT** be a novel or any other work of fiction. It must be an academic book on some aspect of the history of Europe in the 20th century. **It cannot be a biography, graphic novel, written by an activist, or a short book meant for young adults.** It must be approved by the instructor **NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 9**. For every day you are late in requesting book approval, the final grade for the review will be lowered by 5%. I suggest you choose and read the book(s) carefully in the first half of the semester to avoid the end of term flood of assignments. Early work is encouraged. It will be due, without exception, on **October 21** no later than 5pm. No late work will be accepted. Same goes for the exams.

Final Research Paper

The research paper will be one on a topic of interest to you on some aspect of 20th Century European History. You must select a topic and have it approved no later than September 16.

Some possible paper topic suggestions:

Discuss the effects of World War I on only one of the following:

- 1) the European aristocracy
- 2) liberal democracy in eastern Europe
- 3) liberal democracy in Germany
- 4) liberal democracy in Italy
- 5) class relations in England
- 6) relations between the Russia and the rest of Europe
- 7) relations between France and the rest of Europe
- 8) the peoples of the Balkans

Discuss the effects of World War II on only one of the following:

- 1) Eastern Europe

- 2) Germany
- 3) The future Cold War
- 4) De-colonization

Whatever topic you suggest, from the above list or one of your own, I advise you to start very, very early in the semester. I am draconian when it comes to due dates and tend not to be sympathetic toward excuses (I used them all as an undergrad and got burned more often than not). Early work is encouraged. Please use the Writing Center on campus if you fear your written skills are not up to par. Also, it is recommended you meet with me to discuss your topic and your rough outline. I need to know your argument and which points you will highlight to prove your point. Don't be shy with me. I am approachable and informal and was once an undergrad myself. Please use the Turabian style (with my in-class revisions to it) for citation style and formatting for both citation and bibliography.

Extra Credit

I do **NOT** offer extra credit. Don't ask.

Late Work

I do **NOT** accept late work. Don't ask.

Make Up Work/Tests

There will be no make-up work or exams. The only exceptions are for school approved functions, such as sporting or academic events, and for EMERGENCY medical situations and doctor's appointments. No other excuse is acceptable.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: August 27, 2026.
- Deadline to file for December graduation: September 21, 2026.
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" November 23, 2026.
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor. Also, I communicate individually only through my email address: john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu. DO NOT contact me via D2L's email system. However, check your D2L inbox regularly as I will (rarely) post messages to the class through this system.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. This course is structured so that it is to the student's advantage to attend class regularly. Although students are primarily evaluated on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences lower the student's grade. From past

experience, students who choose not to attend on a regular basis are not successful. I allow three, and only three unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in a penalty to your participation grade. If you have a total of **eight** unexcused absences, **you will not pass the course**. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from the course.

Online Computer Requirements

It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.***

Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!*** There are many places to access your class! Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties, there is a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations; however, they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Recording Classes

****Recording classes is prohibited without the professor's explicit permission.*** Such recordings, when permitted, are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services. Such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

Instructor Class Policies

Conduct: All students are expected to act as responsible adults. Any disruptions or distractions will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Below you will find general guidelines covering certain actions and/or behaviors that are to be avoided. As a general rule any behavior that disrupts the administration of this class will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from the time spent in class, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request that the offending student leave the classroom. Furthermore, the professor reserves the right to deduct points from the student's semester total or remove the student from the course. **Arriving late is considered a distraction.** If arriving more than ten (10) minutes late – DO NOT enter the classroom.

Electronic Devices, Texting, and Phones: The use of tape recorders, iPods, or any other recording device in class is **prohibited**. It is imperative that you turn off phones, all other communication devices, and electronic equipment before entering the classroom. The use of a telephone or texting device for any reason is prohibited. *On the first offense the student will be penalized 20 points on her or his participation score for the week. The second offense will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom. The professor reserves the right to administratively withdraw a student from the class upon the third offense.*

Laptops, Tablets, & etc.: You must obtain permission from the professor to use laptops, tablets, and phones (or any other device capable of accessing the internet) in the classroom. Recent scholarship suggests that laptops and tablets are **major distractions** to fellow students and in general do not enhance learning and/or the classroom experience. Furthermore, there will be no surfing, texting, emailing, etc. in the classroom, unless I specifically ask the students to do so.

E-mail: Note that e-mail correspondence is the most effective and convenient way in which to communicate with me outside the classroom. The professor/student relationship is professional by nature and, accordingly, your e-mail correspondence should be constructed professionally. Also DO NOT contact me using my D2L email address. Use john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu only! However, I sometime send group messages to your D2L email, so check this inbox regularly.

Attendance and your grade: This course is structured so that it is to the student's advantage to attend class regularly. From past experience, students who choose not to attend on a regular basis are not successful. I allow three, and only three unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in a penalty to your participation grade. If you have a total of eight unexcused absences, you will not pass the course.

Withdrawals (Course Drop): The professor is NOT responsible for student withdrawals. The student is responsible for meeting all academic deadlines including withdrawal deadlines.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “Run. Hide. Fight.” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#).

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Week 1— Introduction to 20th Century Europe

Aug 24: Introduction to the course

Aug 26: Europe in the late 19th Century

Reading: Gilbert and Large, Chapter 1 (hereafter referred to as “Text”); and
Derfler and Kollander, Chapter 1 (hereafter referred to as “Conflict”)

Your reading assignments will be on D2L for this first week.

Week 2— Imperialism and the Alliance System: Running towards War

Aug 31: Politics and Society to 1914

Reading: Text, Chapter 2

Sept 2: The Origins of the First World War and the Eastern Question

Reading: Text, pp. 90-98

Conflict, Chapter 2

Week 3—The First World War: Modernity and Industrialized Murder

Sept 7: NO CLASS

Sept 9: World War I in Europe

Reading: Text, 98-139

Conflict, Chapter 3

You MUST have approval for book(s) for review by 5pm today.

Week 4— The Unjust Peace and Stabilizing Europe

Sept 14: Versailles and the Paris peace treaties

Reading: Text, Chapter 4

Sept 16: Stabilizing Europe and Destabilizing Russia

Reading: Text, Chapter 5

Conflict, Chapter 4

You MUST have your research paper topic approved by 5pm.

Week 5— Collapse of the European Economies and the Rise of Nazism

Sept 21: The Great Depression

Reading: Text, 229-243

Hans Raupach, “The Impact of the Great Depression on Eastern Europe,”
Journal of Contemporary History 4 (4) (1969), 75-86. JSTOR

Sept 23: The Rise of the Nazi Party

Reading: Text, 243-271

Conflict, Chapter 5

Week 6— The 1930s and the “Inevitable” Road to War

Sept 28: The 1930s and Appeasement

Reading: Text, 272-285

Conflict, Chapter 6

Sept 30: The Spanish Civil War and the Soviet Union

Reading: Text, 285-305

John McCannon, "Soviet Intervention in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39: A Reexamination," *Russian History* 22 (2) (1995), 154-180.

Week 7— World War II: Europe's Demise

Oct 5: The World at War ... Again

Reading: Text, Chapter 8

Conflict, Chapter 7

Oct 7: The Holocaust and Atrocities

Reading: Conflict, Chapter 8

Robert Melson, "Paradigms of Genocide: The Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and Contemporary Mass Destructions," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (548) (1996), 156-168.

Week 8— The Struggle of Ideologies and the Beginning of the Bloc System

Oct 12: From Cooperation to Conflict

Reading: Text, Chapter 9

Exam 1 DUE at beginning of class

Oct 14: Cold War in the Early Years

Reading: Conflict 9

Stephen Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9 (4) (1985), 3-43.

Week 9— The 1950s: Crises, the Spread of the Cold War, Decolonization

Oct 19: European Economic Recovery and Stagnation in Eastern Europe

Reading: Text, Chapter 10

Oct 21: Decolonization and the End of Empires

Reading: Conflict, Chapter 10

Review due by 5pm!

Week 10— Full Economic Recovery and de-Stalinization in the USSR and Eastern Europe

Oct 26: Europe in the Early and Modern 1960s

Reading: Text, 407-427

Peter Alt and Max Schneider, "West Germany's 'Economic Miracle'," *Science and Society* 26 (1) (1962), 46-57

Oct 28: The de-Stalinization of the USSR and Eastern Europe

Reading: Text, 427-436

H. Gordon Skilling, "Background to the Study of Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe," *Government and Opposition* 3 (3) (1968), 294-324

Week 11— Years of Disillusionment and the Challenge to Authority: 1967-73

Nov 2: The Youth in (“Unthinking”) Revolt

Reading: Text, Chapter 12

Nov 4: The Eastern European Revolts: 1968

Reading: Jeremi Suri, “The Promise and Failure of ‘Developed Socialism’: The Soviet ‘Thaw’ and the Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964-1972,” *Contemporary European History* 15 (2) (2006), 133-158.

Week 12— 1970s Stagflation and the renewed search for European Unity

Nov 9: Détente and Economic Stagnation

Reading: Text, Chapter 13

Nov 11: The 1980s and Building of the European Union

Reading: Text, Chapter 14

Conflict, Chapter 11

Polished draft of final paper due at beginning of class.

Week 13— The Collapse of Communism and Reemergence of Political Nationalism

Nov 16: The Inevitable Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and USSR

Reading: Text, Chapter 15

Conflict, 12

Nov 18: What does Eastern Europe now mean?

Reading: Alan Dingsdale, “Redefining ‘Eastern Europe’: A New Regional Geography of post-Socialist Europe?” *Geography* 84 (3) (1999), 204-221.

Week 14—Balkan wars and Persistence of Nationalism

Nov 30: The Final Decade: Europe in the 1990s

Reading: Text, Chapter 16 and pp. 590-604 and 608-613

Dec 2: The Fall of Yugoslavia and the Triumph of Nationalism

Reading: Conflict, Chapter 13

Final Paper due at 5pm

Final Exam due on December 9 at 5pm

Graduate addendum

For the graduate students enrolled in the course: you are responsible for all the above assignments, including the take home exams. Below are the additional stipulations you must meet to successfully complete this course.

As for the book review: This will be a comparative book review in which you select 2 books and do a comparative analysis of the two. You will evaluate which of the books is a better historical work. To compare apples to apples, you should pick two books that cover roughly the same topic in 20th century history. You may also make this a historiographic comparison in which the authors’ arguments, styles of writing, sources, etc. are compared/contrasted. The word limit on this exercise is between 1500 and 1800 words.

As for the final research paper: I am expecting graduate level research and writing on this paper. The word limit on this exercise is between 4500 and 5400 words. As with the undergraduates, you will meet with me on book review selections and on the topic of your paper. I expect regular verbal reports on your research and writing progress throughout the semester.