



Survey of Western Civilization Since 1500AD

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

HIST 1433 Section 101

Fall 2026

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

Some scholars and journalists argue that the French Revolution was the event that brought Europe kicking and screaming into the “modern” period. It is true that this revolution challenged autocratic, aristocratic rule, sparked the birth and development of modern nationalism, and allowed for “enlightened” thought to influence mass politics and society. However, the development of the modern state and statecraft preceded this event by approximately two centuries. We will explore the history of the modern state and statecraft in this course and see how changing political, diplomatic, and economic processes shaped Europe from the Reformation in 1517 to the recent expansion of the European Union into Eastern and Central Europe and the Balkans in 2004/2007.

Some of the more important questions we’ll analyze include how and why the centralized state emerged and how concepts from the Enlightenment shaped its forms and structures. Why did nationalists strive to create nation-states to the detriment of multiethnic empires? Why was imperialism so important to European states? Were WWI, WWII, and the Holocaust products of modernity and enlightened thought, or were they deviations? Were communism and socialism movements to benefit the masses or used merely to dupe them into revolutionary activity? Why did Europe’s importance decline so precipitously in the post-war era? What is the role of the EU and its predecessors?

The course itself examines almost five centuries of history primarily through the lenses of imperialism and nationalism, two processes that significantly shaped Europe and the world and sparked much

conflict. Furthermore, since history examines human change over time, we will focus much of our discussion on European revolutions and how they shaped the modern world. Beyond presenting a narrative of events, this course is meant to stimulate discussion of historical issues, while challenging preconceived notions or prejudices in an environment of respect for those with differing perspectives. It will also give you a better understanding of the historian's craft by making you interpret history through the analysis of primary documents. You will develop and sharpen your analytical and writing skills through these exercises.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Walter McDougall, *The Mighty Continent: A Candid History of Modern Europe*, 2026. 9781967613007. (Referred to as "Text" in the course schedule below).

Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, 1993. It is your responsibility to start reading Browning and be ready to discuss the entire book by the time we get to the class on the Shoah.

D2L 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

Percentages for each assignment.

Assignments	Percentage
3 exams 20% each. Sept 22; Oct 27; Dec 10	60
Analytical Book Review of Browning. Approximately 900-1200 words. Due on November 5 by 4pm.	20
Active Participation and Attendance – may include pop-quizzes, summaries, and in-class assignments	20

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

The book review will be turned in to a D2L dropbox in WORD FORMAT ONLY. NO PDF OR GOOGLE DOCS will be accepted. ****Assignments 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 taken in class and a final during the scheduled time in exam week. All must be handwritten in class in blue books (blank booklets with a blue cover)

available at the campus bookstore. Each exam's study guide is immediately available for students to access and to study. The guides include the exact terms and essays that you are responsible for on each exam. We will discuss this more in class.

If I were you, at the beginning of the course, I would **immediately start the process of finding the who, what, where, when, how, and why answers** on the terms and practice writing the exam essays long before the exam times. Keep these in a separate notebook. In this manner, you will come to know the basics of each lecture/discussion, so you can better perform in class, and build your knowledge base for exams, discussions, and pop quizzes.

Book Review

The book review may be a new exercise to some. It is **NOT a book report**. Reviews are **critiques of books** in which the reviewer briefly describes the main thesis and 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. Now 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.

Early work is encouraged and I will go over drafts. The assignment is **due**, without exception, on **November 5 no later than 4pm**. No late work will be accepted.

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 the Course and Policies

Reading: Text, Chapters 4 and 7

Aug 25—Introduction and the World just before 1500

Aug 27—Renaissance and World Exploration/Colonization

Week 2—The Reformation, Counterreformation, and Religious Wars

Reading: Text, Chapters 5 and 6

Sept 1—Reformation and Counterreformation, “Germany” and France before 1618

Sept 3—The Thirty Years’ War and the Establishment of the Modern State

Week 3—Absolutism and Parliamentarianism

Reading: Text Chapters 8 and 9

Sept 8—Absolutism in France: Reaction to Instability

Sept 10—The Rise of Parliamentarianism in England

Week 4—The Rise of Prussia, Russia, and the Ottomans to 1750

Reading: Text Chapter 11 and Turnbull, pp. 30-91 (D2L)

Sept 15—The Rise and Consolidation of Prussia and Russia

Sept 17—The Military Rise and Threat of the Ottoman Empire

Week 5—The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment

Reading: Text, Chapters 10 and 12

Sept 22—**EXAM 1**

Sept 24—Science and the Questioning of Absolutism

Week 6—Colonialism and Britain as a World Leader

Reading: Text, Chapter 13 and Nino Palma, “Sailing away from Malthus:

Intercontinental Trade and European Economic Growth, 1500-1800,” 129-149 (D2L)

Sept 29—The Agricultural Revolution and the Rise of Trading Empires

Oct 1—The UK and Overseas Colonization

Week 7—The French Revolution and Napoleon

Reading: Text, Chapter 14 and Peter Alter, “Playing with the Nation: Napoleon and the Culture of Nationalism,” 61-75 (D2L).

Oct 6—The French Revolution to the Rise of Bonaparte

Oct 8—Napoleon and the Fall of French Continental Dominance

Week 8—Conservative Europe and the Triumph of Ideologies

Reading: Text, Chapters 15 and 18

Oct 13—Conservative and Liberalism

Oct 15—Socialism

Week 9—Industrial Revolutions and 1848 Revolutions

Reading: Text, Chapters 16 and 17

Oct 20—First and Second Industrial Revolutions

Oct 22—1848 and the Domination of Nationalism

Week 10—Unifications of Italy and Germany and Disrupting the Balance of Power

Reading: Text, Chapters 19-21

Oct 27—**EXAM 2**

Oct 29—Overturning the Balance of Power and Growing National Tensions

Week 11—The War to End all Wars and the Russian Disaster

Reading: Text, Chapters 22 and 23

Nov 3—Modern Warfare and Industrialized Killing

Nov 5—Russian Revolution and Bolshevik Seizure of Power

BOOK REVIEW DUE AT 4PM (NO EXCEPTIONS)

Week 12—Interwar Europe: The Rise of Fascism

Reading: Text, Chapters 24 and 25

Nov 10—Mussolini and Hitler: The Rejection of the post-war Order

Nov 12—The Spanish Civil War and the Descent into Catastrophe

Week 13—World War II and the Holocaust

Reading: Text, Chapter 26 and *Ordinary Men*

Nov 17—Blitzkrieg and the Second World War

Nov 19—The Shoah: Mass Murder on an Industrial Scale

Week 14—The Cold War and Post-War Europe

Reading: Text, Chapter 27 and 28

Dec 1—The Cold War and the Fall of the Soviet Union

Dec 3—The “Unification” of Europe and Unfulfilled Promises and Equality

Final Exam: December 10 from 1-3pm. Remember a blue book!