Tuesday/Thursday 13.30-14.45
Spring 2011

Dr. Travis
NYU in Florence

EUROPE since 1945

Politics and society, war and peace in modern Europe over a fifty-year period in the last century. The primary goal of this course is to consider how developments since the outbreak of the Second World War have influenced the lives and formed the outlook of today's Europeans. Topics of particular attention include European fascism, the Second World War, the division of Europe and the Cold War, reconstruction and economic "miracle" in western Europe, de-colonization, eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the 1960s, and the collapse of communist states in the 1980s. On several occasions, we will look in more detail at the history of post-war Italy to illustrate specific topics. All of these subjects will help us understand “Europe”, including the prospects for a wider unity.

We study the history of this period through lectures, chapters from a primary text, other readings (five novels, one personal account, and one analysis), and several films. We also have two site visits in Florence scheduled; please reserve these Fridays immediately. Please note the significant amount of reading required. Class time will be set aside for discussion. All books are available for purchase at a local bookstore. Copies are also kept on reserve in the Villa Ulivi library. Students will view films on their own schedule.

We will also focus on a particular author this semester. Tony Judt (NYU, Remarque Institute) was a prominent public intellectual for the past two decades. He is the author of our main text, and we will also read a short essay (on European unity) and his last major work, Ill Fares the Land. This book was an overview of the most significant problems facing western democracies in 2010, and we will read it closely and participate in an NYU in Florence conference (in April) on the issues this essay raises.

Course requirements: regular attendance, mid-term and final examinations, active participation and contributions to all discussions, and the presentation of a topic or reading once during the semester. Both the mid-term and final examinations will include essay questions and historically significant terms; the mid-term essay will be a take-home assignment. The overall course grade is based equally on mid-term, final examination and in-class performance. Please note: Attendance: You are expected to be present for all classes, including the special sessions as indicated on the syllabus. Personal computers are permitted in class but only for the purpose of taking notes.
READINGS (in order of appearance)
Tony JUDT Postwar: a History of Europe since 1945
Joseph HELLER Catch-22
Jerzy KOSINSKI The Painted Bird
Harry MULISCH The Assault
Arthur KOESTLER Darkness at Noon
Milan KUNDERA The Unbearable Lightness of Being
Leonardo SCIASCIA The Day of the Owl
Tony JUDT A Grand Illusion: an Essay on Europe (Villa Ulivi library)
Tony JUDT Ill Fares the Land (Villa Ulivi library)
Paul GINSBORG Contemporary Italy: 1943-1988 (one chpt, Ulivi library)
Timothy GARTON ASH The File

FILMS (some films partially screened in class)
Leni RIEFENSTAHL Triumph of the Will (1936)
Roberto ROSSELLINI Rome, Open City (1945)
Carl REED The Third Man (1947)
Vittoria De SICA The Bicycle Thief (1947)
Gillo PONTECORVO The Battle of Algiers (1967)
Alain TANNER Jonas Who Will be 25 in the Year 2000 (1973)

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

1, 3 February Introduction, European Geography, Timeline
  • Riefenstahl, Triumph of the Will (film)

8,10, 11 February War and Its Effects
  • Heller, Catch-22
  • Judt, chapters 1, 2

11 February (Friday). Site Visit: American Cemetery, Florence

15,17 February Immediate Post-War
  • Kosinsky, The Painted Bird (student presentation and discussion)
  • Judt, chapters 3,4
  • Rossellini, Rome Open City (film)

22,24 February Cold War and the Division of the Continent
  • Judt, chapters 4,5,6
  • Reed, The Third Man (film)
1, 3 March
1945-1948: Italy and Czechoslovakia. The Economic Miracle in Western Europe.
• Judt, chpts 7, Coda, 8
• Mulsich, The Assault (student presentation and discussion)
• De Sica, The Bicycle Thief (film)

8, 10 March
Eastern Europe in the 1950s. Mid-Term examination
• Koestler, Darkness at Noon (student presentation and discussion)

15, 17 March
Spring Break

22, 24 March
Decolonization
• Pontecorvo, The Battle of Algiers (film) (Presentation and discussion)
• Judt, chapter 9, 10

29, 31 March
The 1960s: East and West
• Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being (student presentation and discussion)
• Judt, chapters 11, 12, 13

5, 7 April
More on the 1960s
• Tanner, Jonas Who Will be 25 in the Year 2000 (film)
• Judt, “What is Living and What is Dead in Social Democracy” (video lecture and transcript)
• Judt: Ill Fares the Land

12, 14 April
• Judt: A Grand Illusion

19, 21 April
Terrorism, 1969-1983
• Ginsborg, chapter 10 (relevant sections)

26, 28, 29 April
Organized Crime
• Sciascia, Day of the Owl (student presentation and discussion)

29 April (Friday) Site Visit: Via Georgofili, Florence

3, 5 May
1989: End of the Cold War.
• Garton-Ash, The File (student presentation and discussion)
• Judt, chapters 18, 19, 23 and 24

10, 12 May
Final Examination (both days)
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