

SPRING SEMESTER 2014

Class: Monday and Wednesday 11:45 - 12:55 in Reeves Library 212
Additional Thursday 1:10 – 2:20 in Reeves Library 212 for FR 391

Office: Comenius Hall 104

Office hours: M-W-Th - 10:00 - 11:30 or by appointment.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will discuss the issue of War and Peace in Western Europe from 1870 until the present with a special focus on WWI and WWII. We will focus first on the causal effect of the collapse of moral values, at the political and subsequently social levels, on the escalation of violence and hatred. We will see how wars always start with lies and how they are always deemed to be “just and fair.” Then we will discuss the relentlessly deceitful propaganda by which they are sustained and how the sole purpose of this propaganda is to brainwash public opinion into hating the enemy in order to justify his humiliation and destruction. Finally, the last part of the course will concentrate upon the establishment of a lasting peace process through constructive reconciliation. We will then see how true reconciliation requires a return to such moral principles as truth and respect of the other. Special emphasis will be placed on the relationship between France and Germany throughout the period covered but comparisons with present times will be solicited from students and references will be made to the war in Vietnam and the war in Iraq.

BOOKS:

Remarque, Erich Maria, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Random House Publishing Group, 1928

Vercors, *The Silence of the Sea*

SYLLABUS

Monday January 13, 2014 - Class 1

Introduction of the purpose of the course and brief discussion of the war between France and Prussia in 1970 with an emphasis on the impact that the lies of the propaganda had on civilian populations.

Assignment: Hand-outs

Wednesday January 15, 2014 - Class 2

We discuss the short stories, the outcome of the war and the armistice (Treaty of Francfort). Emphasis is placed on the punitive nature of the treaty and the inevitable spirit of revenge that it fostered.

Assignment: start reading Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quite on the Western Front*, 1929 and also hand-outs.

Wednesday January 22, 2014 - Class 3

Today we focus on the impact that the Treaty of Frankfort had on the civilian populations of France and Germany during the years leading to WWI and its role in the resumption of the hostilities in 1914.

Hand-outs and reading Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quite on the Western Front*

Monday January 27, 2014 - Class 4

Discussion of some of the real causes of WWI as opposed to the “official causes” as expressed by national governments. With a series of photos, we see how, as the war started, a strict censorship was imposed by the British, French and German governments to make it possible for them to lie to their civilian populations by means of deceitful propagandas.

End the reading of Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Film *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Wednesday January 29, 2014 - Class 5

Discussion of *All Quiet on the Western Front* to understand how, as the war progressed, the discrepancy between the reality of the war and the description of it by national propagandas increased. Also, we start discussing how those national propagandas differed in their manipulation of their targeted population (photos of posters used will be shown).

Assignment:

Excerpts of articles from several British, French and German newspapers of the time will be assigned to give an idea of the disinformation the civilians were shamelessly subjected to on a daily basis by their own governments.

Film by Christian Carion: *Joyeux Noel*, 2005, a story of the Christmas truce of 1914 seen through the eyes of British, French and German soldiers. The film brings a sense of human dignity and moral decency in the midst of the cruelty of the war.

Monday February 03, 2014 - Class 6

Nick Roberts gives an oral presentation on *The Battle of Verdun and Battle of the Somme*

Pictures of posters and a discussion of the major cultural differences between national propagandas give the students some awareness of the multiple ways to convince civilian populations to support the war while hiding from them the real

truth about the evolution of the hostilities. The question here is: how can people make decent daily-life decisions when they are lied to repeatedly?

Assignment:

More excerpts from British, French and German newspapers of the time and film by Jean Renoir: *La Grande Illusion (Grand Illusion), 1937*, story of class relationships among some French officers who are prisoners of war during WWI.

Wednesday February 05 - Class 7

Justin Charles gives an oral presentation on the film *Joyeux Noel*

The United States join the war and bring another form of propaganda. We discuss a series of photos of posters showing the increasingly violent nature of all propagandas in their attempts at fostering a feeling of hatred towards the enemies.

Assignment

Read excerpts from the Treaty of Versailles - 1919

Monday February 10, 2014 - Class 8

First Hourly test

Students choose a topic for their first paper and consulting with me.

Wednesday February 12 - Class 9

Jenny Styka gives an oral presentation on the film *Grand Illusion*

The war comes to an end with the “revengeful” Treaty of Versailles. We discuss the weakness of the European political authorities in reassuring their population still shocked by the devastation of the war.

Assignment:

Start reading Vercors, *The Silence of the Sea*, 1942, a clandestinely-published story of an old Frenchman and his niece who, in their own particular way, show resistance against the German occupiers.

Also, film by István Szabó, *Mephisto*, a story of an actor who abandons his conscience to ingratiate himself with the Nazis.

Monday February 17, 2014 - Class 10

After discussing the general context of the 1920's in France, Germany and Britain, we see how the World Market crash impacted the populations of those countries in order to understand better the rise of Nazism.

Assignment:

Continue reading Vercors *The Silence of the Sea*

Wednesday February 19, 2014 - Class 11

Emily Baer gives an oral presentation on the film *Mephisto*

Nazi propaganda in Germany, pacifist propagandas in Britain and France and their impact on civilians. Again, national authorities shamelessly discard all moral ethics in brainwashing their people. We discuss the film *Mephisto* and the relative ease with which an intelligent and otherwise decent individual can lose his conscience.

Assignment:

Vercors' *The Silence of the Sea* should be finished.

Film by Steven Spielberg: *Schindler's List*, 1993, a story of a German businessman who saved the lives of more than a thousand Polish-Jewish refugees.

Monday February 24, 2014 - Class 12

The first paper is due.

World War II, the invasion and occupation of France. Civilian responses to the Vichy government. Discussion of Vercors' novel *The Silence of the Sea*.

Assignment: Film by Louis Malle: *Lacombe Lucien*, 1974, a story of a teenage boy during the German occupation of France.

Wednesday February 26, 2014 - Class 13

Jake Heaton gives an oral presentation on the film *Schindler's List*

Discussion of the escalation of violence in the German propaganda and the increasing persecution of the Jewish people. We reflect upon daily life for German Jews in Berlin through photos of a permanent exhibit on that very topic.

Assignment: Film by Marcel Ophuls: *The Sorrow and the Pity*, 1969, on France's Vichy government from 1940 to 1944.

SPRING BREAK

Monday March 10, 2014 - Class 14

Patrick Murnin gives an oral presentation on the film *Lacombe, Lucien*,

Today we consider first the collapse of all moral values, as expressed not only by the Nazi regime (SA and SS) and numerous indoctrinated civilians in Germany, but also by collaborators with the Vichy regime in France. We reflect upon the testimonies of various civilians who, when confronted with life-threatening situations made a variety of choices they probably would have previously considered unimaginable.

Assignment: TBA

Wednesday March 12, 2014 - Class 15

Second hourly test.

Assignment: Film by Frank Pierson: Conspiracy, 2001, a dramatic recreation of the Wannsee Conference where the “Final Solution” was agreed upon and planned

Monday March 17, 2014 - Class 16

Vicky Mordan and Cody Moyer give a presentation on the film The Sorrow and the Pity

Violence reaches its culmination with the extermination of the Jews and others considered undesirable. We discuss the hell of the concentration camps through photos of the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Dachau, Mauthausen and Sachsenhausen. Can years of propaganda be blamed for such mass murders?

Assignment:

Film by Jean-Pierre Melville Army of Shadows

Wednesday March 19, 2014 - Class 17

Casey Hilferty gives an oral presentation on the film Conspiracy

Discussion of individual behavior in a context of racial deportations and murders. We take a look at some of those who chose to remain passive, at those who chose to collaborate and those who decided to enter resistance movements. We see that the choices are not simple.

Assignment:

Selection of articles on the massacre of Oradour/Glane to be distributed in class.

Monday March 24, 2014 - Class 18

Frank Marchetta gives an oral presentation on the film *Army of Shadows*

We continue the discussion on the same theme but we add to it the annihilation of the village of Oradour by a regiment of SS. Here we have the civilian population of an entire village massacred at random. Slides will be show of the ruins of the village and we will have a discussion of them along with the articles assigned.

Assignment: TBA

Wednesday March 26, 2014 - Class 19

End of WWII. How to end the war and take care of the civilian populations? Should justice be done and, if so, what kind of justice? How to assess the different levels of criminal activities? Who should be severely punished and who should be forgiven? So many difficult choices!

Assignment: Articles on the Nuremberg Trials to be distributed in class.

Monday March 31, 2014 - Class 20

Justen Anthony gives an oral presentation on the Nuremberg Trials

Discussion of the Nuremberg Trials lead to the question: should Germany be brought back into the concert of “civilized” nations? If so, how? How can the cycle of revenge that has been going on since 1870 be broken? The discussion will focus on the difficulty for the Allies to find a compromise acceptable to everybody. The Nuremberg Trials and the Marshall Plan provide a good start for consideration.

Students choose a topic for their second paper in consultation with me

Assignment: TBA

Wednesday April 2, 2014 - Class 21

Politicians in Germany and France agree that the two arch enemies need to be reconciled. The question is how? We discuss the Schumann Declaration and the offer to build a community with Germany as a member.

Monday April 7, 2014 - Class 22

Third and last hourly test

Assignment: press articles about programs meant to facilitate reconciliation between the population of France and Germany.

Wednesday April 9, 2014 - Class 23

The Elysée Treaty, also called the Friendship Treaty, signed by C. de Gaulle and K. Adenauer in 1963 made official the reconciliation between France and Germany. We discuss some of the programs implemented to bring the people of the two countries together. The main issues to discuss here are again guilt and forgiveness.

Monday April 14, 2014 - Class 24

The second paper is due

Today we focus on the successful reconciliation between France and Germany both at the official level and at many more personal levels. We see how human values of mutual respect and friendship bring former arch enemies together in a context of peace and cooperation. We look at photos of meetings of reconciliation between French and German Heads of State on the battlefield of WWI and at Oradour.

Assignment: Students make a short list of what they think are the main lessons to draw from the course. Could they be repeated and under what conditions?

Wednesday April 16, 2014 - Class 25

The last two classes will be devoted to a discussion of the above-mentioned lists prepared by the students.

Wednesday April 23, 2014 – Class 26

Same as above

Final Exam

COURSE POLICY

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory and class participation is very highly encouraged. You must come to class prepared, with good knowledge of the material covered in the previous class, and of the reading assigned as homework. During the semester you will be allowed to miss class **twice** (the equivalent of one week of work) with no question asked. Unpredicted situations can always happen and some tolerance is necessary. After two absences however you will need a credible note from your doctor (in case of illness) or from a person able to testify as to the seriousness of the situation. This, of course, excludes friends, roommates and neighbors, but not parents and College officials. Unless you have a very good reason, **DO NOT ASK** for make-ups.

After the two tolerated absences, further unexcused absences will be penalized and **the final grade lowered**. The student will be notified of her/his situation before the grade is lowered.

Grade assignment

There will be three hourly tests and two papers. The midterm grade will be determined by averaging the grade on the first quiz, the grade on the paper and the class participation.

The final grade will include the average of the tests for 40%, the average of the papers for 25%, the final exam for 25%, and the class participation for 10%

Finally, when writing your papers, **be careful with plagiarism.** Quoting from a book, journal, or some kind of website without indicating the source does constitute plagiarism and will be reported to the Dean's Office.

Social behavior

Remember also that a class is a social activity. As such, a few rules of social behavior and courtesy must be respected.

I will not chew gum in class out of respect for you, and I expect the same from you in return. I will not wear a cap of any sort that might hide my face or part of it, and I also expect the same from you in return. To foster an environment conducive to learning ALL cellular phones will have to be turned off at the beginning of each class. Sending text messages during class will NOT be tolerated. If I see such activity going on I will confiscate the cell – I have done it in the past- and I will not hesitate to do it again. Also, there is no going back and forth to the bathroom, the water fountain or wherever during class because it is disturbing. Make sure you take your precautions before going to class. Finally, I will also ask you to refrain from eating in class. If you really have a problem with any of these rules, feel free to let me know ahead of time.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Learning Services for Academic and Disability Support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

NOTE ON TIME COMMITMENT

The student work load in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four credit hour course. It is expected that you will work an average of 10 hours per week on this course outside of the regular class meetings.

I wish you all a good, productive and pleasant semester.

Last recommendation

If you have a problem of whatever kind, please let me know early. Do NOT wait until the situation worsens. You are always welcome to stop by my office (Comenius 104) and discuss whatever concern you may have.