

## EUROPE IN AN AGE OF ABSOLUTISM & REVOLUTION 1648-1815

Hist 367.01, CID 3511  
Credit 3.0  
MWF 10:00-11:00  
Sam Houston State University  
Spring 2008

Prof. David Mayes  
Office: AB4 #457  
Office Hrs: MWF 11:00-12:00, TT 11:00-12:15  
Office Phone: 294-1485  
Email: his\_dcm@shsu.edu

### Description of the Course

Much of what makes the period of European history from 1648 to 1815 fascinating is that medieval and modern forms of life overlap within it. As a result, it offers vivid contrasts. On the one hand Europe still retained characteristics that would have been familiar to someone living in the Middle Ages. Monarchs still sat on the thrones in most European countries and many of them exercised a greater degree of power than ever before. Nobles still lived in grand residences, owned much of the land, and enjoyed the rights and privileges associated with aristocracy. Most commoners, who composed a great majority of the population, cobbled their way through life as agriculturalists or artisans as did generations of their ancestors. And most people attended services in their local parish church on a regular basis. On the other hand Europe increasingly took on appearances that are recognizable in our own day. Modern states were steadily forming. They were also expanding their overseas empires, many of which lasted into the twentieth century and the effects of which remain quite visible today. Towns and ports bustled with vibrant trade headed by an entrepreneurial, commercial class. Scientific discoveries helped spur an educated elite to propose new ways of thinking, governing, and organizing society. Last but hardly least, technological innovations sparked revolutions in production that fundamentally and irreversibly changed life in Europe and then in the world.

The course will explore these themes in five major units: (1) "Background to the Course" will help establish the historical context by surveying the crisis phase of European history up to 1648; (2) "Rise of a European State System" examines how the system arose in the later 17<sup>th</sup>-earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century; (3) "New Directions in Art, Science & Thought" considers the alternatives and innovations in religion, intellectual pursuits and the arts; (4) "Society & Economy under the *Ancien Régime*" explores a European livelihood based on an older system of three orders or estates and on a newer system of capitalism anchored by a reviving urban trade and expanding mercantile empires; (5) "Challenges to the Old Order" closes out the semester by depicting how revolutions in agriculture, industry and the sociopolitical arena wrought profound transformations to the modes in which Europeans had lived since the High Middle Ages.

### Objectives for the Course. Students will learn:

- factual knowledge of the subject matter
- fundamental principles, generalizations, & theories pertaining to European History 1648-1815
- skill in expressing oneself orally & in writing
- to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments & points of view

### Required Books

These books are required for the course:

- Robin W. Winks & Thomas E. Kaiser, *Europe from the Old Regime to the Age of Revolution 1648-1815*. Oxford, 2004. ISBN 978-0-19-51446-7

- Duc de Saint-Simon & Bayle St. John, *Memoirs of Louis XIV & The Regency*, pt. 2. Kessinger Publishing. ISBN141918041X.
- Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*. Harvard, 1982. ISBN 0-674-53657-6
- H.C.Erik Midelfort, *Exorcism and Enlightenment: Johann Joseph Gassner and the Demons of Eighteenth-Century Germany*. Yale, 2005. ISBN 0-300-10669-6

\*I will also pass out or post on Blackboard a few other, primary source readings\*

### **Attendance Policy**

I expect every student to be present and on time for every class. If you happen to arrive more than 5 minutes late on a particular day, I would ask that you not enter the classroom since it disrupts the session and annoys those students who are punctual. The only exceptions regarding tardiness will be on days of inclement weather. I will feel obligated to disseminate material and instructions one time only. In case of any absence, whether excused or unexcused, you are still responsible for the material covered and obtaining it is incumbent upon you. It would be a good idea to establish relationships with fellow students in order to assure that you remain well informed and are adequately prepared for exams.

Per University policy, an attendance sheet will be passed around at each class session. You may miss three hours of class without penalty. Three points will be deducted from your overall semester grade for each absence beyond these three hours of missed class. In the event you experience some emergency for missing class after your three hours, you must provide documentation (to my satisfaction) for those days. In the event you must drop this class, please remember, do so through the Registrar's office. Otherwise, your course grade will be "F."

### **Classroom Policy, Holy Days Policy, Academic Honesty, Students with Disabilities**

The University's policies regarding these matters can be found at the following link:

<http://www.shsu.edu/mailler/coursesyllabus.pdf>

### **Additional Notes**

Do make note that the university has placed a limit on the number of "Q" a student can have on a transcript of his/her student records. Also, as a condition of enrollment in this course, a student agrees to give permission to have all written materials checked for plagiarism by computer internet verification. Continued enrollment in this course beyond the 12th class day constitutes your agreement to this condition. I would prefer that you not bring a tape recorder to class unless you can provide some documentation for a disability. Please be considerate of your classmates. In consideration of time constraints and unforeseen circumstances that might adversely affect the majority of the class, I will reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus.

### **Exams**

There will be two Mid-Term exams & one Final exam for the course. Each of them will be in the form of one essay question and one identification.

### **Readings, Short Papers**

The required readings provide us with engaging primary sources and secondary literature.

Listed in the Outline below are the reading assignments for the Winks/Kaiser book (listed as W/K). Be sure to have read the assigned chapter before coming to class that day.

A Short Paper will be due for each of the other three books (by Duc de Saint-Simon, H.C.Erik Midelfort and Robert Darnton). I will post on Blackboard a question or two pertaining to the book and you are to write out your own response to that question.

The purpose of the Short Papers is three-fold. First, they are an effective means for learning the subject matter. In the process of completing each assignment you will be reading the history of a given subject, processing and analyzing that material according to the question provided, reformulating the material in your own words in response to the question, and making insightful comparisons. (Plus, the nature of these assignments allows you to work at a pace and at a time convenient to you.) Second, the Short Papers provide you with good opportunities to improve your writing skills. I will make corrections and offer suggestions so that you can – step by step – improve your writing ability. Let me recommend, therefore, that you look through the corrections/suggestions made on the sheet handed back to you and consider them carefully when writing subsequent assignments. Third, they will provide a springboard for class discussions that goes beyond the who-what-when-where and considers the how and the why.

Each Short Paper is to be typed, printed out, and handed in on the day it is due. You are to use 12-font (Times New Roman), double-spacing, and 1-inch margins on each side. In the top, left-hand corner be sure to put your name, word count, and indicate which Short Paper assignment it is. The text should be 750-800 words in length.

### **Debate Worksheet**

On February 15 we will have an in-class debate on Constitutionalism v. Absolutism. On February 4 I will pass out photocopies of primary source material (the writings of political theorists) and also post a set of questions pertaining to the writings. You are to compose a response to each question as a means to prepare for the debate. The completed Worksheet should be typed (12-font, Times New Roman, double-spaced), printed out and stapled, and handed in on the day of the debate. Only those Worksheets handed in during class will be accepted (i.e. none will be accepted that are submitted via email or handed in any time before or after that class).

### **Term Paper**

Each student is to write a term paper for this course. It can be on the subject of politics, society, culture, religion, the economy, military history, science & technology, medicine, the arts, urban studies, rural studies, and so forth. However, it should NOT be something that largely repeats what we have already covered in class. Rather, the objective of the paper is (1) to provide you the opportunity to explore a subject of your own interest, and (2) to cultivate your own research, analytical, critical-thinking, and writing skills. All told the paper should make use of 5-10 scholarly works. Of those works, the paper should be based on primary source material and your reading of it. Secondary literature should then be utilized by incorporating it into your text and analysis where appropriate. Bonus points will be given to papers that include material (books, journal articles, ...) in a foreign language. It is recommended that you search other library catalogs and sources on the Internet to find the best possible materials for your paper and, if you do find them, order

them via interlibrary loan. \*Note: because interlibrary loans may not arrive quickly, you should place the order in plenty of time.

On Friday, March 31 you are to hand in a 1-page progress report on your paper. The report should have a paragraph that summarizes the paper's topic and content, an outline (as detailed as possible), and a list of the works being used. Once I've read through your report I will likely give you some feedback on the direction of your paper.

The due date for the Term Paper itself is Friday, April 25. Its length is to be more than 5 pages and less than 7 full pages, and the text should be formatted using 12-font (preferably Times New Roman), double-spacing, 1-inch margins on each side, footnotes, and a bibliography. In terms of citation, one can refer to the Writing Center's "Chicago Style" handout, but I would much more strongly recommend Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (7<sup>th</sup> edition) or *The Chicago Manual of Style*, both of which are in the Reference section of the Library. It is also highly recommended that each student take a rough draft (once if not a few times) to the Writing Center in order to have it checked for mistakes and for improvements in grammar, style, punctuation, organization, sentence structure, and so forth.

### **Class Presentation**

During the last two weeks of the semester, each student will give an in-class presentation based on his/her term paper. Your presentation is to be approximately 15 minutes in length, with a few minutes following for Question & Answer. You will receive a handout that will describe in detail how to prepare your presentation.

### **Grading**

|                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| Exams (3)        | 30% (10% each) |
| Short Papers (3) | 30% (10% each) |
| Debate Worksheet | 10%            |
| Term Paper       | 25%            |
| Presentation     | 5%             |

\*Note: Grades will be posted and updated on Blackboard over the course of the semester. Once you've taken the Final Exam and your semester grade is finalized on Blackboard, it cannot be negotiated. Do not come by office or write me an email at the end of the semester asking (i.e. pleading) if you can do anything such as extra credit work or a make-up assignment in order to try and raise your grade. You will be able to track your grade on Blackboard throughout the semester, which means you will know as the semester goes along whether you have to work harder to get the letter grade you want.

### **Late Policy**

Any writing assignment handed in late will be marked down 10 points for each of the first three days that it is late (I would advise you to turn in to me any late paper via email attachment so that you incur the least amount of penalty). Beyond that point no credit can be earned for the paper. Make-ups for missed exams must be done within 5 school days of the scheduled exam day, and unless you can provide official paperwork verifying why you missed the exam, 15 points will be subtracted from the exam score.

**Outline**

| Date   | Topic   | Assignment<br>(* means an assignment is due) |
|--|---|--|
| <b>I. BACKGROUND</b>   |   |  |
| 1/16-1/18  | Introduction to the Course, Historiography                                  |  |
| 1/23-1/28  | General Crisis of the 17 <sup>th</sup> Century: Economy, Politics, Religion | W/K: ch. 1 (1/28)                            |
| <b>II. RISE OF A EUROPEAN STATE SYSTEM:<br/>SUCCESSFUL/UNSUCCESSFUL PATHS TO POWER</b> |   |  |
| 1/30   | “New West” I: Revolution in Poly Sci – Absolutism v. Constitutionalism      |  |
| 2/1-2/8  | Absolutism on the Continent   | *Short Paper due on Duc de Saint-Simon, 2/4  |
| 2/11-2/13  | Constitutionalism in England  |  |
| 2/15   | In-Class Debate: Absolutism v. Constitutionalism                            | *Worksheet 2/15                              |
| <b>III. NEW DIRECTIONS IN ART, SCIENCE &amp; THOUGHT</b>                               |   |  |
| 2/18-2/20  | Baroque   |  |
| 2/22   | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Mid-Term Exam</b>   |  |
| 2/25   | “New West” II: Revolution in Natural Science: “Scientific Revolution”       | W/K: chapter 3                               |
| 2/27   | Medicine in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century                                    |  |
| 2/29-3/7   | The Enlightenment   | *Short Paper due on Midelfort, 3/5           |
| <b>IV. SOCIETY &amp; ECONOMY UNDER THE <i>ANCIEN RÉGIME</i></b>                        |   |  |
| 3/17   | “New West” III: The Rise of Capitalism                                      | W/K: chapter 2                               |
| 3/19   | Colonial Empires: Expansion, Slavery & Trade                                |  |
| 3/24-3/26  | Urban Life in 18 <sup>th</sup> -century Europe                              | *Short Paper due on Darnton, 3/26            |
| 3/28-3/31  | The Aristocracy: Hierarchy & Privilege, Neo-Classicism                      |  |
| 4/2  | <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Mid-Term Exam</b>   |  |
| 4/4-4/11   | The Peasantry: of Europe, of Hesse  |  |
| <b>V. CHALLENGES TO THE OLD ORDER</b>  |   |  |
| 4/14-4/18  | Revolutions in Production: The Agricultural & Industrial Revolutions        |  |
| 4/21-4/23  | Political Revolution: The French Revolution & Napoleonic Era                | W/K: ch. 4 (4/21)                            |
| 4/25-5/7   | Student Presentations   | *Term Paper 4/25                             |
|  | Final Exam  |  |