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The Dialectic of Enlightenment Europe, 1900-1945

The preeminent historian Eric Hobsbawm dubbed the 20th Century Europe the “Age of Extremes.” This is a fitting title considering that in the first half the century the continent witnessed two world wars, revolution, economic depression, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Empires dissolved and new nations formed in their place. At center stage were two radical ideologies, fascism and communism, which sought to correct the ills of liberalism through social revolution and mass violence. In trying to categorize the catastrophic events of the period, of which the Holocaust stood at its most vivid symbol, the critic Theodor Adorno wrote the very intellectual and social tradition of European modernity, i.e. the Enlightenment, had failed. He wrote: “Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth radiates under the sign of disaster triumphant.”

With Adorno’s indictment in mind, this class examines the history of Europe during one of its most tumultuous periods, 1900-1945. It seeks to understand how fin-de-siècle Europe could in a mere fifty years turn into a continental mass grave. To do this, the class will examine the social, political, economic, and cultural history of Europe with particular focus on imperialism, the rise of socialism and fascism, nationalism and racism, social and political thought, the arts, political violence, total war, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Required Texts:

Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, Vintage, 1989
Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*, 1998.

Class Schedule

Week One

Introduction: European Modernity and its Contradictions

Hobsbawm, Overture and Chapter 1.

Week Two

Empire Abroad, Democracy at Home

Hobsbawm, Chapters 3 and 4

Primary Sources:

M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*,

V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter 6
Rudyard Kipling, *The White Man's Burden*, 1899
Edward Morel, *The Black Man's Burden*, 1903
Karl Pearson, "Social Darwinism: Imperialism Justified by Nature"

Week Three

Nations and their Workers

Hobsbawm, Chapters 5 and 6

Primary Sources:

Houston Stewart Chamberlain, "The Importance of Race"
Theodor Herzl, *On the Jewish State*, 1896
Neinrich von Treitschke, "Races, Tribes, and Nations."

Week Four

Guardians of the Bourgeois Order

Hobsbawm, Chapters 7

Primary Sources:

Thorstein Veblen, "Conspicuous Consumption," 1912
L. T. Hobhouse, "Liberalism," 1911
W. L. Blease, "The New Liberalism," 1913
"From the British Old Age Pensions Act, 1908"
"From the British National Insurance Act, 1911"
"Manifesto of 17 October 1905"
"The Russian Fundamental Law of 23 April 1906"

Week Five

European Society's Others: Women, Youth, and Social Deviants

Hobsbawm, Chapter 8
Paul Lawrence, "Urbanization, Poverty, and Crime"
Elizabeth Harvey, "The Cult of Youth"
Lesley A. Hall, "Sexuality and the Psyche"

Primary Sources:

Francis Galton, "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims"
Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde, "The Young People of Today."
Sigmund Freud, "Psychological Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia," 1911, 83-109

Week Six

The Coming Storm

Hobsbawm, Chapters 12 and 13

Primary Documents:

Durnovo's Memorandum, February 1914

Friedrich von Bernhardi, "The Next War"

Constitution of the Black Hand, 1911

The Narodna Odbrana, 1911

Week Seven

Total War

David Welch, "August 1914: Public Opinion and the Crisis"

Tim Travers, "The War in the Trenches"

Matthew Stibbe, "The War from Above: Aims, Strategy, and Diplomacy"

Mark Baker, "The War and Revolution"

Primary Sources:

R. Scotland Liddell, *On the Russian Front*

Erich Maria Remarque, "How Long it Takes for a Man to Die!"

British World War I Poetry

Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" 1915

Week Eight

The Challenges of Peace at Home and Abroad

Mazower, Preface, Chapters 1 and 2

Primary Sources:

From the Treaty of Versailles, 1919

Labor and the New Social Order, 1918

The Spartacist Manifesto, 1918

Carl Schmitt, "On the Contradiction between Parliamentarism and Democracy" and "On the Concept of the Political."

Week Nine

The Traumas of Total War

Mazower, Chapters 3

James M. Diehl, "Demobilization and Discontent"

Alan Sharp, "Peacemaking after World War I"

Primary Sources:

Ernst Simmel, "War Neuroses and Psychic Trauma," 1918

Ernst Troeltsch, "The Dogma of Guilt," 1924

Ernst Junger, "Fire," 1922

Kurt Tucholsky, "The Spirit of 1914," 1924

Week Ten

Modernism in Art, Science, and Thought

Hobsbawm, Chapter 11
Robin Walz, "Modernism"
Cathryn Carson, "The Revolution in Science"

Primary Sources:

"The Futurist Manifestos"
Andre Breton, "What is Surrealism?"
Walter Gropius, "On the Bauhaus"

Week Eleven

Jazz Age and "Americanization"

Thomas J. Saunders, "The Jazz Age"
Mazower, Chapter 4

Primary Sources:

Stefan Zweig, "The Monotonization of the World"
Friedrich Sieburg, "Worshipping Elevators"
Adolf Helfeld, "America and the New Objectivity"
Alice Gerstel, "Jazz Band"
Katharina Rathaus, "Charleston; Every Age Has the Dance it Deserves"
Ivan Goll, "The Negroes are Conquering Europe"
Hanns Kropff, "Women as Shoppers"
Ernst Lorsky, "The Hour of Chewing Gum"

Week Twelve

Communism and Fascism

William J. Chase, "The Socialist Experiment"
Martin Blinkhorn, "The Fascist Challenge"

Primary Sources:

Benito Mussolini, *The Doctrine of Fascism*
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*
Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*
Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Democracy against the Nation*

Week Thirteen

Race War

Mazower, Chapter 5
Anita J. Prazmowska, "Hitler and the Origins of World War II"
David French, "The Real War"

Primary Documents:

Vasili Grossman, "In The Main Line Of Attack"

Milovan Djilas, extract from *Wartime*

Wannsee Protocol

"Blood Purification and anti-Jewish Legislation"

Week Fourteen

The Holocaust and the Gulag

David Engel, "The Holocaust"

Steven Barnes, "Gulag"

Primary Sources:

Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, selections

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, selections