Western Civilization since 1500

Prof. Jeffrey Auerbach       History 151
Office: Sierra Tower 603       Fall 2010
Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-3:00       TTh 11-12:15
Phone: 818-677-3561        Location: SQ104
E-mail: jeffrey.auerbach@csun.edu
Website: www.csun.edu/~jaa7021/westciv

Description: There is no such thing as Western Civilization, and this is a course about it. While Western Civilization is generally described as rational, secular, capitalist, imperialist, liberal, democratic, and technological, these characteristics are rarely viewed through a comparative lens. Moreover, even as these values have come into being over the past 500 years, they have been contested: rationality by spirituality and postmodernism, capitalism by socialism, liberalism by totalitarianism and racism, all of which raises questions about the utility of the term Western Civilization. Using a brief textbook along with travel accounts, autobiography, novels, film, art, and poetry, this course will trace the evolution and changing definition of what is commonly referred to as Western Civilization by situating it in a global context. Successful completion of this course will satisfy three units of the lower division requirement of the history major and either Section F1 (Comparative Cultural Studies) of General Education Plan C, or Section S5 (Comparative Cultural Studies) of General Education Plan R.

Objectives:
• To explore the evolution and changing meaning of Western Civilization
• To think comparatively about Western Civilization by situating it in a global context
• To develop a sense of causality, context, contingency, and chronology
• To learn to read and interpret historical sources critically and analytically
• To consider the role of the individual in modern history

Required Books: (Available at Matador Bookstore)
• Christopher Columbus, The Four Voyages (Penguin)
• Olaudah Equiano, The Life of Olaudah Equiano (Dover)
• Emile Zola, Germinal (Penguin)
• George Orwell, 1984 (Signet)

Assignments:
• Four Reading Worksheets (15% each) due Sept. 7 (Columbus), Sept. 28 (Equiano), Oct. 21 (Zola), and Nov. 18 (Orwell). Questions will be handed out one week in advance.
• Final Exam (40%), scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 10:15-12:15. Combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay covering the lectures and readings. In addition to other questions, you will be asked to compare and contrast the voyages of Columbus and Equiano, and/or to discuss the opportunities (or lack thereof) for individuals in industrialized societies such as those presented in Germinal and 1984.
Course Policies:

• You are expected to attend class and to arrive on time. I reserve the right to lower the grade of anyone who misses a substantial proportion of classes or who arrives late repeatedly. Please turn off your cell phone when you enter the classroom. There should be no text messaging during class. It is rude, distracting, and not conducive to learning.

• Taking notes on laptops will not be permitted. Recent studies suggest that students who use laptops in class perform worse (on average) than their non-laptop using peers, and are much less likely to pay attention in class. Laptop screens can also be a distraction for other students. Additionally, taking notes longhand encourages you to process and distill information before writing it down, producing notes that are generally more succinct, better organized, and more useful. Laptop use for note taking only will be allowed for those students with a documented disability or medical need. Students who receive permission to use a laptop in class must sit in the front row, and must email their class notes to the instructor at the end of each class.

• The final exam must be taken as scheduled. There will be no early exams; make-ups will only be given in case of your own hospitalization. Late assignments will be marked down one-third of a grade per day. Missed assignments will be entered as a zero.

• Any student caught plagiarizing (copying someone else’s words or ideas, whether on paper or from the internet, without crediting them fully) or cheating (copying from another student or using unauthorized notes during an exam) will receive a failing grade for the course and will be referred to the Office of Student Affairs for disciplinary action. All your work must be your own.

• Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities (Bayramian Hall 110). COD Staff will approve appropriate accommodations.

• The instructor reserves the right to modify the course schedule or assignments. Students will be given adequate notice of any changes.

Surviving and Thriving:

• There are two equally important components to this course: the readings and the lecture-discussions. You are expected to attend each and every class, and to come to class ready to take notes and having completed the assigned reading(s) for that day.

• The lecture-discussions are meant to frame and work in conjunction with, rather than duplicate, the readings. For every class I will provide a PowerPoint outline to assist you in your note taking; it is up to you to fill in the details. A brief outline of each lecture, as well as supplemental web-based information, is available at www.csun.edu/~jaa7021/westciv.

• You will need to develop good listening skills: to concentrate on what I and your classmates say, think about it, reduce it to a summary of key ideas and points, and record those in your notes. As a note taker, you must learn to distill, rather than transcribe.

• If you find yourself falling behind, or are having any problems outside of class that are adversely affecting your performance in class, please see me or send me an email as soon as a problem arises. If you are struggling academically, I will gladly give you extra help. Do not wait until the end of the semester when it will be too late. You may not withdraw from the class late in the semester simply because you are doing poorly.

• A graduate student will be holding optional discussion sections to go over the lectures, readings, and homework. She will also hold an optional review session before the final exam. Feel free to contact her with any questions at catherine.givertz.266@my.csun.edu.
## Schedule of Lectures and Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 24</td>
<td>Introduction: What is the West?</td>
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<td><strong>Part I: The Old Regime and the New World</strong></td>
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<td>Aug. 31</td>
<td>Exploration and Encounter</td>
<td><em>Ways of the World</em>, ch. 14</td>
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<td>Columbus, pp. 37-123</td>
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<td>Sept. 2</td>
<td>Conquest and the Columbian Exchange</td>
<td>Columbus, pp. 127-157, 206-226, 265-276, 283-304</td>
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<td>Sept. 7</td>
<td>Discussion: Columbus</td>
<td>Worksheet #1 Due</td>
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<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>No Class – Rosh Hashanah</td>
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<td>Sept. 14</td>
<td>The Reformation and Religious Schism</td>
<td><em>Ways of the World</em>, ch. 16</td>
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<td>Sept. 16</td>
<td>Toward a Scientific Worldview</td>
<td>Handout: Galileo</td>
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<td><strong>Part II: Individualism and Human Rights</strong></td>
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<td>Sept. 21</td>
<td>Capitalism and Slavery</td>
<td><em>Ways of the World</em>, ch. 15</td>
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<td>Equiano, pp. 9-107</td>
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<td>Sept. 23</td>
<td>Enlightenment and Abolition</td>
<td>Equiano, pp. 108-180</td>
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<td>Sept. 28</td>
<td>Discussion: Equiano</td>
<td>Worksheet #2 Due</td>
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<td>Sept. 30</td>
<td>The Age of Revolution</td>
<td><em>Ways of the World</em>, ch. 17</td>
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<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td>From Revolution to Terror</td>
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<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>The Napoleonic Era</td>
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<td><strong>Part III: Industrialization and its Discontents</strong></td>
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<td><em>Germinal</em>, Part I (pp. 1-72)</td>
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<td>Oct. 14</td>
<td>The Industrial Revolution: Consequences</td>
<td><em>Germinal</em>, Part II (pp. 73-134)</td>
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Oct. 19  The Age of Ideology  
          *Germinal*, Parts III-IV (pp. 135-294)

Oct. 21  Discussion: *Germinal*  
          *Germinal*, Parts V-VII (pp. 295-532)  
          Worksheet #3 Due

Oct. 26  Nationalism and the Nation State  
          *Ways of the World*, ch. 19

Oct. 28  The Imperial Age  
          *Ways of the World*, ch. 20

**Part IV: War and Dictatorship**

Nov. 2   The Road to War  
          *Ways of the World*, ch. 21

Nov. 4   World War I  
          Handout: World War I Poems

Nov. 9   Totalitarianism  
          Orwell, pp. 1-104

Nov. 11  No Class – Veterans’ Day

Nov. 16  “Triumph of the Will”  
          Orwell, pp. 105-224

Nov. 18  Discussion: *1984*  
          Orwell, pp. 224-312  
          Worksheet #4 Due

Nov. 23  The Holocaust

**Part V: Redefining the West**

Nov. 25  No Class - Thanksgiving

Nov. 30  From World War to Cold War  
          *Ways of the World*, ch. 22

Dec. 2   Decolonization  
          *Ways of the World*, ch. 23

Dec. 7   Globalization  
          *Ways of the World*, ch. 24

Dec. 14  Final Exam, 10:15 am