MLS 610 Age of Revolutions
William Hamilton

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

Understand the factors that gave rise to new social, religious, political, and intellectual revolutions in Western culture after the Middle Ages.

Identify common features underlying these changes in Western society.

Develop awareness and sensitivity to ongoing, unfinished revolutions whose full story has yet to unfold.

Required Texts and Films

Perry, Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics, & Society, Cengage Learning, 9th edition

Available at http://www.college.hmco.com

These films should be available in your local video store or used from www.Amazon.com.

One of the following James Bond films:

*Tomorrow Never Dies*
*The World is Not Enough*
*Die Another Day*

*Breaking the Waves* (a Scottish film)

*Inherit the Wind* (Spencer Tracy) **OR** the original *Planet of the Apes* (Charlton Heston)

*Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin)

*Reds* (Warren Beatty and Dianne Keaton)

*Frida* (Salma Hayek)

*The Corporation* (documentary)

General Description of Course Activities

The course employs a variety of learning styles and exercises. Students will become proficient navigating online data bases and weblinks to augment readings in the basic textbook and to draw upon for completing assignments. Students will be expected to participate in online discussions, maintain journals, and complete a final project. Several films and supplemental readings form the basis for group discussion. The course offers many more assignments than
can be completed, so students will have some choice in what they do. Please note the requirements below.

Online Discussion

The course is divided into twelve (12) units. You will be expected to participate in at least one discussion for each unit. Participation includes posting your original response to the question and responding to the posts of at least two (2) other students.

Online Journals

A journal entry is essentially a short paper that only the professor will read and respond to. Generally, it should be from 500 to 1000 words in length, and observe the rules of grammar, punctuation, and good organization. Though many potential journal entries are presented, you will be expected to complete five (5) over the course of the semester. You may complete more if you wish, but will receive a grade on five entries of your choice, presumably your best ones. If you plan to submit more than five journal entries, be sure to specify GRADE in the comments lines of the entries you want graded. Note: If you submit more than five journal entries but do not designate which ones you wish to receive a grade, the professor will evaluate them and assign grades for your five best entries.

Final Project

For Unit 12, you will complete a 6-10 page project on an “unfinished” revolution of your choosing. The value of the exercise is that each student will set the research agenda (that is, ask one major question on the chosen area of study and determine a strategy for answering that question). That means that each student chooses which topic she or he will research and “fills in” the gap of our knowledge about the particular theme.

Rather than regurgitate the accepted knowledge by repeating it on exams or rehashing it in a term paper, the project is an invitation to observe and learn about new areas of investigation, ask penetrating questions that yield understanding, and articulate your new awareness of that particular issue. In essence, you have an opportunity to “construct new knowledge.” Your new construction could take the form of a term paper of six to ten pages. You should list sources such as books, scholarly articles, films, works of art, and weblinks. It could also include exercises and assignments, graphics, suggestions for further study.

Tests and/or Self-tests

There are no tests in this course.
How Graded

Grades are based on participation in discussions and journals and on your final project. See your calendar for dates.

Assignments will be awarded points based on quality of writing and depth of analysis. For example, a journal entry may carry ten points. A journal “essay” earning an A, or 10 out of 10 points, should manifest solid grasp of the readings and issues under discussion and the kind of critical and analytical acumen that makes graduate education both rigorous and intellectually enjoyable. Discussion participation is very important to success of the learning experience. Again, depth and quality of discussion contributions will be rewarded accordingly.

The final grade will be distributed as follows:

Discussion = 1/3 (33.3%)

Journals = 1/3 (33.3%)

Final Project = 1/3 (33.3%)

Unit Topics (13 spread over 15 weeks)

Intro to Course/Consider the Present before the Past

This unit is preliminary and probably partly remedial stuff-geography, political geography, forms of government, how we talk about social, economic, cultural matters. What are we talking about when we use the terms "western" and "civilization"? We will survey contemporary institutions, ideas, and conditions so we have some idea of what the past has led to so far.

1. Commercial Revolution

This chapter goes from late medieval trading patterns and practices through the rise of great commercial centers like Antwerp and enterprises like the Hanseatic League and the great expansion of commercial activity connected with the age of exploration. Special issues include the profit mentality, accounting practices, shipbuilding, and early capitalism.

2. Protestant Revolution

Covers the Reformation and the rise of religious pluralism. Contrast old/new belief systems. Implications for political thought and practice. Wars of religion through 1648.

3. Scientific Revolution

The Copernican system, the Newtonian universe, Descartes and the boundaries of science. Biology, medicine, chemistry. The early Enlightenment.
4. English Revolution


5. French Revolution

Absolutism in theory and practice; democratic theory; 1789-1799; Napoleon and the legacy of the revolution; epilogue: 1815-71, revolutions and constitutions.

6. Industrial Revolution

Industrialization; economic and social consequences; rise of the middle class, liberal economics; liberal politics; imperialism.

7. Darwinian Revolution

Romanticism background (organic-growing and changing-favored over idea of rational absolutes); Darwin and natural selection; social Darwinism; belief in progress; urbanization and art (early impressionism); Marx.

Central texts: Darwin, Origin of Species; Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto

8. Technological Revolution

Guns, ships, trains, banks, cinematography; WWI; beginning of American century; the individual out of control (Freud and the unconscious); reclaiming the subjective-modern art (cubism).

9. Russian Revolution

Lenin and the dictatorship of the proletariat; 1917-1924; Stalin and the rise of the Soviet Union.

10. Totalitarian Revolution

Rise of Fascism and Nazism; order vs. chaos; statism vs. egoism; nationalism and the problem of the "other"-prelude to Holocaust; WWII.

11. Global Revolution

Decolonization and the legacy of the West; Cold War; post-Cold War world and western civilization.

12. Unfinished Revolutions

A study of ongoing and newly unfolding sexual, intellectual, and religious disruptions that challenge and vex Western political, economic, and social institutions.