

Dr. Leah Goldman  
Office: Old Main 204C  
Office Hours: Online by appointment  
lgoldman@washjeff.edu

## **HIS 270: Europe's Long Twentieth Century** **Final Paper Assignment**

### **Overview**

This paper is the culminating assignment of this class. It serves as an opportunity to put the critical reading and writing skills you have been building all semester to work in service of a unique historical argument. In these prompts, you are asked to place our sources in dialogue and draw your own, evidence-based conclusions about what they reveal about major developments in the history of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. These topics are designed to be open-ended and give you room to develop a unique analytical perspective. You may choose one of the topics below or create your own. If you create your own topic you must get my approval by Monday, April 13. I encourage you to be bold, be creative, and have fun!

### **Requirements**

- **Length**: Your paper must be **1500 words long**, *not including* your bibliography. I will allow a maximum of 200 words deviation.
- **Formatting**: Include your **name and title** on the first page. **Number** your pages. You must use **12-point font, double spacing, and 1-inch margins**.
- **Citations and Bibliography**: In the body of your paper, you may use either **internal citations** or **footnotes** (not both). You must also attach a **Works Cited** as a separate page at the end of your text. Both your Works Cited and your footnotes should be formatted using the *Chicago Manual of Style* (available online through the Library's website). If you do not have the complete bibliographic information for a source, you can find it on **WorldCat**, which is also available on the Library website.

### **Instructions**

Choose one of the following topics (or create your own, with my approval!) and respond to it using **only** the texts we have read in class. You must formulate a **thesis statement** (an argument in response to the topic), which should appear in the first paragraph of your paper. Your argument should be based on your interpretation of the texts and be backed up by properly cited quotations. Remember to explain your interpretation! The main question for each topic is in **bold**. That's the part you must be sure to answer. The other questions function as suggestions to help you think through your chosen topic. You do not have to address every one of them.

This assignment is scaffolded into three steps:

**1) Introduction + Outline.** Choose a topic and write a one-paragraph introduction, which includes your thesis statement. You should also write an outline for the rest of your paper. The Outline should include three main points that build on each other to argue for your thesis statement. Under each main point, you should list your evidence (for example, a quote from a

primary source). This will create a roadmap you can use for writing your paper. You must submit your Intro + Outline as a single document on Sakai by **Sunday, April 19 at 5pm**.

\*Remember to check out the **HIS240 Writing Handout** for advice on writing an Introduction and Thesis Statement! You can find it on the course website under Writing Resources.

**2) Meeting with me.** I will meet with each of you individually for 15 minutes on MS Teams to talk through your Intro + Outline. We will do these meetings as video chats on MS Teams. If you have access issues that prevent you from using Teams, we can do the meeting over the phone. I will share a sign-up sheet with you so everyone can reserve a spot. These meetings will take place on **April 23**.

**3) Final Draft.** Your completed paper will be due on **Friday, May 8 at 10pm**, submitted via Sakai. I cannot accept late papers after May 12.

\*\*\*\*\*In case you missed it before, here is my policy on **plagiarism**: Don't do it! Plagiarism is a very serious offence, which can destroy your academic career and professional prospects. If you plagiarize, **you will automatically fail my class**. I am all-seeing and all-knowing, and I *will* catch you. Please, save us both a lot of time and worry: don't even try it. If at any time you have questions about how to avoid plagiarism, feel free to ask me.

I will do my best to be available to meet with you as often as you like. I will read partial drafts up until May 6.

**Good luck!!!! Please let me know if you have any questions!**

### **Paper Topics**

#### **Topic One:**

During the twentieth century, the lives of European women improved significantly. They participated in revolutions, gained legal equality, and increasingly entered the workforce. However, even as women's circumstances improved, feminist thinkers identified more subtle ways in which they still faced discrimination. Compare Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and consider the following question: **How did the problem of women's liberation evolve during the first of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?** In what ways do Woolf and Beauvoir understand this problem similarly to each other? In what ways do they understand it differently? How did the experience of living through a world war shape each of their thinking? Does the situation Beauvoir describes demonstrate progress since Woolf's time or stagnation? Does this comparison provide evidence that women are on a positive trajectory and will eventually reach full equality? Or does it demonstrate that some aspects of this issue are endemic to European society and will never be resolved?

#### **Topic Two:**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights lays out a series of principles that all member-states of the United Nations have agreed to respect. These include specific rights for all people, regardless of nationality, as well as protections against discrimination. Compare the principles outlined in the UDHR with the issues highlighted in Jane Kramer's article "Taking the Veil" and

the Tumblr “I, Too, Am Oxford.” You may also include David Cameron’s speech “Prime Minister’s Speech at the Munich Security Conference” in your analysis. Consider the following question: **Has Europe abided by its obligations in the UDHR in its treatment of post-colonial immigrants or has it violated them?** Does the UDHR require nations to respect multiculturalism? If so, do these materials demonstrate that Europeans have done this as well as possible or not? Are laws against the wearing of veils inherently discriminatory? Is the UDHR flexible enough to protect individuals against microaggressions? If so, how can nations enact this principle without violating other freedoms guaranteed in the UDHR?

**Topic Three:**

In 1968, student protesters in Paris embraced communism. That same year, student protesters in Prague—on the other side of the “Iron Curtain”—fought in the streets against the communist forces of the Warsaw Pact. Twenty years later, protesters across the Eastern Bloc overthrew their communist governments. Take Daniel Cohn-Bendit’s interview with Jean-Paul Sartre as an example of the Western perspective. Compare it to either Heda Margolius Kovaly’s *Under a Cruel Star* or Timothy Garton Ash’s *The Magic Lantern*. Consider the following question: **Did Europeans spend the Cold War fighting about communism, or did “communism” serve as a proxy for other issues?** In the West, was Cohn-Bendit’s embrace of communism well thought out or was it a symbolic rebellion? Was his communism the same as the Soviet version? In the East, was Rudolf Margolius’ belief in communism based on political theory or trauma? Were the Prague Spring protesters—or the protesters in 1989—rejecting communism in favor of capitalism, or were they rejecting authoritarianism?

**Topic Four:**

As Mark Mazower points out, the twentieth century’s worst tragedies played out in Eastern Europe, in the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. The problem of borders and belonging has remained an issue in this region from WWI to the present. Compare Joseph Roth’s story “The Bust of the Emperor” to Slavenka Drakulić’s “People from Three Borders” and consider the following question: **Has the idea of the nation-state been more helpful or more harmful to Eastern Europe?** What problems has this idea caused in this region? What positive developments has it enabled? Who has harmed and who has benefitted? Is the sorting out of nationality necessary for this region to find stability? Would it be better if some new version of the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire were restored? If so, how would it be governed?

**Topic Five:**

Across the 20<sup>th</sup> century to today, Europe’s wars have caused massive, recurring refugee crises. This is as true of its imperial and proxy wars as it is of its domestic ones. Each wave of refugees has posed a challenge to Europe’s idea of itself and its values. Compare Joseph Roth’s commentary “Refugees from the East” (in *What I Saw*) with Tara Zahra’s commentary “The Return of No-Man’s Land” from 2015 and consider the following question: **Has Europe become better or worse in its handling of the refugee crises it has created?** Did refugees receive more humane or less humane treatment in the 1920s than they do today? How do issues of race and ethnicity enter into this question? What claims have Europeans used to deny help to refugees and how has that discourse changed over the past hundred years? Have Muslims taken the place of Jews as a dangerous “Other” in the European imagination? Does Europe owe refuge to those whom its wars have displaced?