

New Jersey Institute of Technology

HIST 213-015

The 20th Century World

Fall 2025

TR: 1:00-2:20

FMH 108

Professor Elektra Kostopoulou

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Please email me via Canvas if you have any questions directly relevant to this class. I will be answering your class-related emails before each meeting.



Communication

Office | #323 Cullimore Hall

Office Hours

Wednesdays: 12:00-3:00 pm

Zoom | For zoom meetings we will be using the link provided via Canvas.

Academic Calendar

<https://www.njit.edu/registrar/calendars>

Sep 2: First day of classes

Dec 11: Last day of classes

Brief Course Description

This course introduces students to the manifold histories of the 20th century. It is organized in chronological order, incorporating different regions of the world and various methodologies of world history into a coherent narrative. Together, we will examine the ways political, economic, and social processes have informed one another on the macro and micro level. The course shifts focus from the West to the rest of the world, inviting students to think in comparative, integrative terms.

Prominent themes include revolutionary nationalisms and enduring empires; notions of modernity, peace, and war; technology in the context of global interactions; economic and political expressions of globalization.

General University Requirement Category (200 level Cultural History):

The goal of this course is to empower students to understand historical events and movements in the world, both Western and non-Western, and to assess their subsequent significance. It uses case studies to provide an interdisciplinary view of the 20th-century world. It satisfies three credits of the GUR in Cultural History.

Course Goals

- Identify and interpret primary and secondary sources.
- Learn key political, economic, and cultural concepts.
- Establish comparisons between past and present issues.
- Discover connections among different parts of the world.
- Understand and implement interdisciplinary approaches.
- Exercise analytical thought, orally and in writing.
- Develop out-of-the-box thinking skills.

Course Requirements

1. Attend all classes prepared for a critical discussion and do the weekly readings.
2. Complete the weekly assignments.
3. Complete the take-home midterm assignment—which is connected to the final paper.
4. Complete the final research paper on the topic of your choice in connection to the course themes and scopes.

Indicative Topics

The following topics are merely suggestions. You do not have to limit yourselves to them. You can write about anything you want, provided you manage to demonstrate a good understanding of a) 20th century world history b) historical methodology.

1) individuals: Albert Einstein, Nikolai Tesla, Frida Carlo, Fidel Castro, Kemal Atatruk, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Indira Gandhi, Pablo Picasso, Diego Riviera, Nelson Mandela, Mao Zedong, Raicho Hiratsuka etc.

2) inventions: telegraph, telephone, televised networks, computers, airplanes, washing machines, typewriter, radiation, military technology, nuclear power etc.

3) artistic movements: Art Nouveau, Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, Suprematism, Peking Spring etc.

4) urban history: the evolution of a specific region/town/city/rural or urban territory in the 20th century etc.

5) specific events and their global implications: Great Depression, WWI or WWII, the Cuban Revolution, De-colonization of Africa, the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Revolution, Indian Independence, the Chinese Revolution, the Mexican Revolution etc.

or any other topic of relevance.

The paper should be 5-6 pages in length, double-spaced (not including a cover page or references). You should use at least 2 peer-reviewed publications and 1 primary source (Chicago style for review articles).

***Papers should be submitted online through Turnitin (deadline to be announced).**

You don't need to purchase a textbook for this class. All required readings/sources will be provided online by the instructor.

Main Additional Online References: <https://www.khanacademy.org/Links to an external site.> and <https://www.encyclopedia.com/Links to an external site.>

Grading

- Attendance/Class participation/In-Class assignments: 30%
- Weekly responses: 20%
- Source Analysis/Research paper: 40%
- Primary Source Analysis (midterm): 10%

90-100%: Excellent Work (A)

85-89%: Very Good (B+)

80-84%: Good (B)

75-79%: Satisfactory Plus (C+)

70-74%: Satisfactory (C)

60-69%: Marginal (D) Below 60%: Failure (F)

Academic Integrity

“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:

<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>Links to an external site.

*Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. **Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”***

Generative AI

For this course, students are encouraged to engage with emerging technologies, including AI tools, as part of their learning experience. However, the use of AI-generated content (e.g., text, code, images) in assignments, projects, or any form of assessment must be approached with caution and integrity.

It is crucial that AI tools are used as supplementary aids and not as replacements for original thought or individual effort.

Before incorporating AI tools into your work, you are required to consult with the course instructor to ensure that such use aligns with the academic objectives and integrity standards of this course. Unauthorized or inappropriate use of AI tools may be considered academic misconduct and subject to disciplinary action.

Students are encouraged to develop their own analytical and critical thinking skills and to use AI tools in a manner that supports, rather than undermines, their educational growth.

The goal of this policy is to foster a learning environment that promotes critical thinking, originality, and ethical engagement with technology. Always prioritize your understanding and skill development, and use AI tools to complement, not replace, your efforts.



Weekly Topics

Week One

Required Reading

Loloum, T. (2020), Containing the Future Shock. *Soc Anthropol*, 28: 306-307. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12872>

Discussion Themes

Between Global and World Histories

What is World History?

Explaining the syllabus and course requirements.

Suggested Readings

Toffler, *Future Shock* (1970).

World History Association, 'What is World History?' Source: http://www.thewha.org/world_history.php

Week Two

Required Reading

"NOW WE HAVE ONLY PEOPLES' WARS" (pp. 16-29) in Lukacs, John. *A Short History of the Twentieth Century, 183-205*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Discussion Themes

- Consolidating Nations and Constructing Empires
- Expansion and Nation Building in the Americas

- Consolidation of Nation States in Europe
- Industry, Science and Technology
- Global Expansionism and an Age of Imperialism
- Pressures of Expansion in Japan, Russia, and China

Indicative Primary Sources

“Manifest Destiny” (1845), John L. O’Sullivan (17.1); *On the Origin of Species* (1859) Charles Darwin.

Week Three

Required Readings

Kil, Sang Hea. “Fearing Yellow, Imagining White: Media Analysis of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.” *Social identities* 18, no. 6 (2012): 663–677.

Discussion themes

- Progress, Upheaval, and Movement
- The Age of Mass Movement
- Worldwide Insecurities

Primary Sources

Transport Worker’s Strike (1911); <https://www.europeana.eu/en/blog/voices-from-the-past-20th-century-migration-in-audio-and-video>Links to an external site.; <https://www.phillipscollection.org/event/2019-06-21-warmth-other-suns-stories-global-displacement>

Week Four

Required Readings

Chorba, Terence, and Byron Breedlove. “Concurrent Conflicts—the Great War and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.” *Emerging infectious diseases* 24, no. 10 (2018): 1968–1969.

Seker, Nesim. “Demographic Engineering in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Armenians.” *Middle Eastern studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 461–474.

Additional Source: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-origins/era-7-the-great-convergence-and-divergence-1880-ce-to-the-future/71-world-war-1-beta/a/read-what-caused-the-first-world-war-beta>

Discussion themes

- The Quest for the Modern.
- The Great War.

Primary Sources

BBC Archive on WWI; UPI Archive on the Russian Revolution; To Heinrich Zangger (1915), Albert Einstein; *The Fourteen Points* (1918), USA President Wilson; *The Speech* (1919), Kemal Ataturk.

Week Five

Required Readings

Bhattacharyya, Sambit. "Expansionism, Russian Revolution, and the Two World Wars." In *A History of Global Capitalism: Feuding Elites and Imperial Expansion*, edited by Sambit Bhattacharyya, 81–100. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020.

Discussion themes

- The Russian Revolution (1917)
- The Soviet Union and WWII

Additional Source: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-origins/era-7-the-great-convergence-and-divergence-1880-ce-to-the-future/71-world-war-1-beta/a/read-the-power-of-one-the-russian-revolution-beta>

Primary Sources

Bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat (1919), Lenin;
To the Red Army (1941), Joseph Stalin.

Week Six

Required Readings

Sennett, Alan. "Film Propaganda: Triumph of the Will as a Case Study." *Framework* 55, no. 1 (2014): 45–65.

Zimmerman, Andrew. "Reviews of Books: From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany Richard Weikart." *The American historical review* 110, no. 2 (2005): 566–567.

Additional Source: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/rise-to-world-power/us-wwii/a/american-women-and-world-war-ii>

Discussion themes

- World War II and its aftermath.
- The Beginning of the Cold War.

Primary Sources

Letter to Hitler (1940), Mohandas Gandhi; The New Deal (1932), President Franklin D. Roosevelt; To the Red Army (1941), Joseph Stalin; *Triumph of the Will* (1935), Leni Riefenstahl.

Week Seven | Primary Source Analysis

Week Eight

Required Reading

Ndlovu-Gatsheni C.. Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonization. African Books Collective; 2013

Additional Source: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/imperialism-colonialism-and-decolonization>

Discussion themes

- Decolonization
- Three Worlds.

Primary Sources

The Stonewall Inn; On Negritude (1959), Léopold Sédar Senghor; Family Law Codes (1956), Tunisian State; The Working Woman Maternity Law (1974), Fidel Castro Ruz; On Revolutionary Medicine (1960), Che Guevara.

Week Nine

Required Readings

Paidipaty P. "Tortoises all the way down": Geertz, cybernetics and "culture" at the end of the Cold War. *Anthropological theory*. 2020;20(1):97-129. doi:10.1177/1463499619899747

Additional Source: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/cold-war>

Discussion themes

- The creation of the European Union.
- The Cold War.

Primary Sources

Sociological Record (1978), Zofia Rydet; I Want to Make the World Turn Around (1986), The Steve Miller Band.

Week Ten

Required Readings

Manning K. The Gendered Politics of Woman-Work: Rethinking Radicalism in the Great Leap Forward. *Modern China*. 2006;32(3):349-384.

Additional Sources: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/asia-and-africa/chinese-and-taiwanese-history/great-leap-forward>

Discussion themes

- Last phase of white rule in Africa and Nelson Mandela.
- The rise of China.
- The International Monetary Fund.

Primary Sources

Serve the People (1944), Mao Zedong; Mao Zedong Meets Richard Nixon (1972) <https://china.usc.edu/mao-zedong-meets-richard-nixon-february-21-1972>

Week Eleven

Required reading

McLarney E. Soundscapes of the Iranian Revolution. *Journal of Middle East women's studies*. 2020;16(2):227-234. doi:10.1215/15525864-8238258

Additional Sources: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/sociology-and-social-reform/sociology-general-terms-and-concepts/iranian> Links to an external site.

Discussion themes

- The Middle East and Other Misunderstandings.
- The International Monetary Fund.

Week Twelve

Required reading

Fluri, Jennifer. "Foreign Passports Only': Geographies of (Post)Conflict Work in Kabul, Afghanistan." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 5 (2009): 986–994.

Additional Sources: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/asia-and-africa/chinese-and-taiwanese-history/great-leap-forward>

Discussion themes

- 9/11 and the End of the 20th
- From the Cold War to the War on Terror back to the Cold War.

Week Thirteen

Final Paper Review

Week Fourteen

Final Paper Review

Week Fifteen

Conclusion/ Summary

