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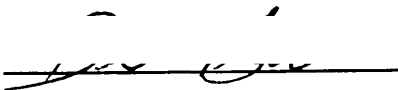
Creating a High School European History Class

Brien McGuire
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Winter 2001



HONORS THESIS

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Signature 

Date MARCH 20, 2001

Brien McGuire
European History/
Western Civilization
Semesters I and II

Summary and Objectives

This class shall cover the course of European history from the rise of the Greek Empire up to the most recent clashes in the Balkans. In all, we will cover about 3000 years of history in 180 days. During the first quarter of the year, we will explore ancient Europe during the time of the Greeks and Romans. The second quarter will take us through the darkness of the Middle Ages. Semester number two begins with a study of early modern Europe, including the Renaissance and Reformation all the way up to the start of the French Revolution. Finally, during our final quarter, we will discuss modern Europe from 1800 up to the current state of affairs.

The emphasis in this class will be individual choice. We will, of course, have a textbook and lectures, but interspersed within the course of any given week I want to provide you, the students, with as much freedom as possible to explore aspects of European history that you find interesting. If you like philosophy, art, literature, religion, or architecture, these areas and others will be open for you to delve into more deeply within the context of the class. I will try to devote one hour a week to discussion of confusing, controversial, and/or interesting subjects of the students' choice (subjects must pertain to the time period being discussed).

Assignments

Timelines- Each quarter, students will be asked to hand in a timeline of events pertaining to the period in question. Timelines should include ten (10) events/people/places/etc. of some importance. They should span as much of the time period as possible. Include a short explanation of why you think each item is important.

Research Paper- 2 parts...

- 1) **Book Report/Review-** There will be a reading list provided covering each of the four time periods. Books on the list are primary sources (this means they were produced during the time period in question) and include philosophies, histories, poetry, plays, novels, and other literature. Every student should pick one that sounds interesting at the start of each quarter (if you have an idea that is not on the list, run it by me first- remember it has to be a primary source). At the end of each quarter, students will hand in a 2-3 page report/review. Report/reviews need to include what the book was, what it says, what you think about what it says, and what does this tell us about the time period.
- 2) **“Choose a decade (century for quarters 1&2)”-** Everyone will select a decade of their choice each quarter. For the paper, research four different nations in Europe during this decade. Discuss the social, political, religious, and/or military (etc., etc.) events going on in each country during the decade in question. How do the countries interact during the decade (if at all)? How are they similar? How are they different? What changes take place during the decade. [decades do not have to start and end on a year ending in zero; decades should be about ten years

long, although I will be flexible seeing as how history doesn't always start and stop in convenient increments].

Overall- The papers should be 7-10 pages long (2-3 for book review and 5-7 for decade review), typed, and double spaced. Have fun with these papers; choose an area you are interested in. If you are having trouble figuring out what to do or need some ideas to jump-start your paper, come talk to me.

Presentations- These are just 4-5 minute presentations of your papers to the class. Share a little about your book, but most of the content should be on your decade. This will not be too much extra work seeing as how you will have completed the papers already. I just think that after you do all of that hard work, you should enlighten the class on your findings for a couple minutes.

Movie/Presentation quizzes- To show you were paying attention during any in-class movies, students need to write one page saying what they thought of the movie.

Discussion- Each week, have a question or comment prepared for discussion of the week's material. Anything you are unsure of, interested in, or simply wish to talk more about is appropriate discussion material. Not everyone will get to present their discussion topic, but I will collect them all. With each topic include one or two sentences about why you chose the topic and/or why the topic interests you (I just want to make sure you are putting a little thought into it). Remember the more you participate in class, the better off you are...

Tests- Tests and Finals will include a list of short essay questions (probably about 5-6) and you will have to choose 2-3 to write about.

Grading

I don't grade on a curve. Everyone should have the same shot at getting an A. Late timelines and papers are ok, but ten percent gets knocked off for each school day it is late (day one starts after I ask, "Does anyone else have a paper for me?" - if you don't right then it's 10% off when I get it). Discussion topics will be collected at the beginning of class, and I don't take late ones.

Grading Scale:

A 100-94, A- 93-90, B+ 89-86, B 85-83, B- 82-80, C+ 79-76, C 75-73, C- 72-70,
D+ 69-66, D 65-63, D- 62-60,

TEXTBOOK

The Western Heritage (sixth edition), by Donald Kagen, Steven Ozment, and Frank M. Turner

PS

Do not be afraid to ask me for help. If you are confused or worried or just lost, let me know and we can figure it out. History is just one big story, every aspect is building on things that happened before. It is just like a long novel, it can be hard to understand the sub-plots sometimes, but if you talk it through and take a step back to look at the bigger picture it can sometimes come more into focus than it ever has before.

If you are having trouble choosing something to read, let me know. We can talk about what you are interested in and figure out what you would enjoy the most. If you aren't interested in anything then we'll just have to change that.

Year-long Calendar (36 weeks)

QUARTER I: Greek and Roman Empires (to 476)

Week 1- Early civilization, Greece, Homer's time

- “ “ 2- Alexander, Greek Empire
- “ “ 3- Greek Art/Culture, philosophy, city states
- “ “ 4- Greek deterioration, Rome on the Rise
- “ “ 5- Start of empire, Julius Caesar, Augustus
- “ “ 6- Expanse of empire, early Christian persecution
- “ “ 7- Dioclecian to Constantine and Christianity, Roman life
- “ “ 8- Overreaching empire, Huns, Goths, Vandals, etc
- “ “ 9- The borders fall, the empire divided up

QUARTER II: Europe in the Middle Ages (476-1453)

Week 1- Byzantine Empire, Justinian, Muslim Empire into Spain

- “ “ 2- Charlemagne, Holy Roman Empire, Pope gaining influence
- “ “ 3- Scandinavian life, Viking expansion/raids
- “ “ 4- Rise of monasticism, monastic life around Europe
- “ “ 5- Crusades, “Feudalistic” life in Europe, Spanish Inquisition
- “ “ 6- In the east, Mongol expansion under Genghis Khan, Ottoman Empire founded
- “ “ 7- Turmoil: Ottoman expansion, Hundred Years War, the Black Plague
- “ “ 8- Life during the Plague, The Great Schism, state of the church
- “ “ 9- Joan of Arc, end of Hundred Years War

QUARTER III: The Renaissance and Reformation, Early Modern Europe (1453-1815)

-see third quarter daily plan-

QUARTER IV: Modern Europe (1815-present)

Week 1- Europe after the French Rev, nation states

- “ “ 2- Beginning of imperial age, colonizing Africa
- “ “ 3- Conflicts in Russia (Crimea), 1848 revolutions
- “ “ 4- In Russia serf emancipation, Germany under Bismarck
- “ “ 5- partition of Africa, Tensions building
- “ “ 6- WWI pre, during, results, Russian revolution
- “ “ 7- Rise of Hitler and the Nazis, Start WWII
- “ “ 8- Finish WWII, results, “Iron Curtain,” world against communism
- “ “ 9- Europe since 1950, fall of Communism, violence in the Balkans

Third Quarter Daily Plan

Week 1- Intro to Renaissance Europe

- 1- Background/Review, State of Europe in the mid-15th century
- 2- In the east- Russia and Ivan the Great, the Ottoman Empire
- 3- War of Roses in England
- 4- Spain rising, Ferdinand and Isabella,
- 5- Discussion (*choose books by today*)

Week 2- Europe wakes up

- 6- Renaissance life, learning
- 7- Changing ideologies: humanism, arts, sciences
- 8- Age of exploration, struggle for dominance of seas/overseas empires (Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, France, Britain)
- 9- The Habsburgs' role on the continent
- 10- Discussion

Week 3- Revolt against Catholicism; Russia becomes an empire

- 11- Martin Luther, John Calvin, other continental reformers
- 12- Henry VIII, the English Reformation, internal strife thru Bloody Mary
- 13- The spread of reform, perception and popularity among Europeans
- 14- Russia under Ivan the Terrible
- 15- Discussion

Week 4- Elizabethan England

- 16- Elizabeth I, Netherlands-Britain defeat Sp. Armada, power begins to shift
- 17- Life under Elizabeth, Protestants and Catholics, the court, Shakespeare

18- watch *Elizabeth*

19- “ “

20- “ “- *quiz on movie (Renaissance/Reformation timelines due)*

Week 5- The Dutch Golden Age; 17th Century power struggles

21- Dutch Empire, VOC, Amsterdam, Mercantilism

22- Problems on the continent, Thirty Years War, Dutch/French/Spanish- religio-
political struggles

23- British commonwealth, Oliver Cromwell, Restoration

24- Life in Restoration England

25- Discussion (*Test on first five weeks*)

Week 6- Constitutional vs. Absolute Monarchies

26- Glorious Revolution, Parliamentary Govt., Protestantism

27- Louis XIV, Absolutism, Versailles

28- Peter the Great in Russia, importing the West, (compare Louis XIV)

29- Louis XIV wars, war of Spanish Succession

30- Discussion

Week 7- The Enlightenment, Age of Ideas

31- Scientific Revolution, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton

32- Philosophy, Locke, Hobbes, Descartes, Rousseau,

33- The Social Contract Theory: in 1688 and influence in 18th cent

34- European social landscape on eve of Fr. Rev.

35- Discussion

Week 8- The French Revolution and Napoleon: Exporting Republicanism

36- Start of French Revolution, driving forces, ideology of 1688?

37- The Reign of Terror, Death of Louis XVI and Antoinette, Robespierre

38- End of Terror, Military success under Napoleon, Consulate and Empire

39- Europe under Napoleon, Final defeat of the French Empire

40- Discussion

Week 9- Presentations, Discussion/Review, Final

41- Presentations¹- papers due

42- Presentations

43- Discussion

44- Review major themes

45- *Final*

¹ Presentations include: talk about book and paper.

Third Quarter Assignments

1) Renaissance/Reformation Timeline	35 Points
2) Movie Quiz	15 Points
3) Test #1	50 Points
4) Paper	80 Points
5) Presentation	20 Points
6) Final	50 Points
7) Discussion/Participation	50 Points
TOTAL	300 POINTS

A Brief Comment on the State of European History in Washington's Public Schools

European History and Western Civilization exist in today's education system in at predetermined interval in each student's academic career. Like in other subjects, students are expected to be proficient in certain aspects of History, World as well as United States and Washington State, by certain grade levels. The state administers a set of tests to students in these grade levels in order to measure the performance of educators in teaching these "essential academic learning requirements." Students are tested once during elementary, junior high, and high school. Although the testing system is undergoing an overhaul currently, it seems the high school year of testing will be 11th grade in the future.

In order for students to meet the standards set forth by the tests, history classes are basically ordered as follows: Washington State in 9th grade, World in 10th grade, and United States in 11th grade. In this way students have a grasp on the three areas of history deemed "essential" by the tests. As for world history, students are expected to be able to group events into broadly defined eras; analyze historical development of civilizations from different continents; investigate topics using electronic resources; discern relevant and irrelevant information; reason logically in accordance with both sides of an issue; and evaluate and contrast ideas from different places and cultures (among other things).¹

This is the extent of standard learning in the area of European History. If a student wants to build on this base of knowledge acquired in World History, elective history classes are offered in most schools. These classes are available for seniors to take, and because they don't have to fulfill a pre-formatted set of standards, these classes have the opportunity for more freedom in terms of curriculum. Many schools offer an AP Euro class or a Current Affairs class (which was

required at my school) as humanities options for seniors. This is where my class fits into the picture of high school history offerings. This class builds on most of the fundamental skills laid out by the testing standards, and therefore is a logical next step in students' exposure to European History.

The impetus behind my creation of the class lies in my desire to make history interesting and engaging to high school students. In my experience, and in my dealings with high schoolers, I have found that many students are bored by history. It is seemingly distant, irrelevant, and confusing to a lot of people. My goal in this class is to generate interest and curiosity about history through discussion, literature, and more freedom for students to choose project topics and direct discussions. I also want to emphasize the relevance of history to our lives today by encouraging "historical thinking"² and take every opportunity to point out recurring historical trends.³ Basically, I want to make the history come alive for everyone else like it has for me.

¹ Washington State Commission on Student Learning, 1998 (90).

² I learned the term in Dr. Leonard's class. I understand it as consciously placing today's events in a historical context. How does what I'm doing today build on something that happened before, and what will this lead to.

³ I always heard that history repeated itself, but I never really was presented with concrete examples. I had to come by them on my own in college.