

HISTORY 208—Europe in the Age of Total War

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EXAM #3 Study Guide **Key questions, themes, examples** **rev 11/18/24**

The format for Exam #3 will be the same as the previous exam, with three sections: Part 1: Very Short Answer, Part 2: Short Answer, and Part 3: Mini-Essay. The exam will cover material from Monday, October 14 through Monday, November 18 (from Jay Winter through alternative sources).

I've posted copies of class presentations to Moodle.

QUESTIONS FOR PART 3

Questions for Part 3, Mini-Essay. I will give you two of these three questions. I may ask a simpler version of one on Part 2.

1. How can Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* help us to understand the history of 20th c. Europe? How can historical monographs, more generally, help us complicate the story told by Ian Kershaw?
2. How George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) help us to understand the history of 20th c. Europe? How can primary sources, more generally, help us complicate the story told by Ian Kershaw?
3. How can Fritz Lang's film *M* (1931) help us to understand the history of 20th c. Europe? How can primary sources, more generally, help us complicate the story told by Ian Kershaw?

KEY THEMES AND EXAMPLES

Concepts of Historical Analysis

What are the central concepts of historical analysis?

- The Five C's of Historical Analysis
- Change and continuity. What changes? What stays the same?
- Context. What was the historical context of the time?
- Causality. What are the forces of change?
- Contingency. How might events have turned out differently?
- Complexity. Events are often shaped by multiple events. Experiences vary dramatically by time and place. The same event may be experienced very differently by individuals from different positions.

Historical Research

What are the steps of historical research? Identify a topic, develop an interesting historical question or research question, understand the historiography on the topic, analyze primary sources, present an argument, examine evidence to support the argument, explain the significance of your work.

Working with Primary Sources

What is a primary source? Documents that provide first-hand evidence of the topic at hand. These primary sources include documents that are contemporary with the events under study, such as newspaper articles, trial transcripts, diaries, letters, reports, legislative documents, etc. They also include first-hand accounts at a distance to the past, such as memoirs and oral history interview transcripts. They include imaginative works, such as novels and poems, visual works, such as photographs and paintings, complex creative works, such as films and music, material culture, such as jewelry and pottery, and more.

How should you analyze a primary source? First answer some basic questions: Who is the author? When and where was it produced? Who was it produced for? What does it purport to be? What story does it tell?

And then develop your own perspective. Some questions that might follow: How does the source work? How is it constructed? What is its internal logic? What views or assumptions are revealed here? What is missing here? Are there important silences? Or obfuscations? What does the source reveal about its author? What does the source reveal about the context in which it was written? What do historians say about the source? Do you see something different in it? What?

Working with Secondary Sources

What is a secondary source? The term is used differently by different people. For our purposes, it is a scholarly book or article.

Historiography refers to the body of secondary sources by historians on a topic – or, more generally, to the ways in which historians have approached a particular topic.

What is a historical monograph? A book by a historian devoted to a particular topic, presenting an argument. We can distinguish it from articles, textbooks and surveys (which are secondary sources but not monographs).

How should a historian read a historical monograph to understand the argument? Read the introduction very carefully. Here is where the author will lay out the topic and the argument. Read book reviews from historical journals (this is not cheating).

How do historians create new histories? They ask research questions. They look to overlooked sources or events. They look at these sources or events in new ways. They respond to previous arguments and develop new arguments.

Jay Winter and the Memory of the First World War

Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

American historian, retired now from Yale. Expert on the WW1 and the study of memory. Also involved in public history, having co-produced an important documentary on WW1 and participating in the design and establishment of a historical museum and memorial at the Historial de la Grande Guerre at the site of the Somme.

In *Sites of Memory*, he investigates the ways in which European societies in Britain, France, and Germany, processed the grief of the war and its devastation. He asks, most simply, how was the war remembered.

His argument is an argument for continuity. In contrast to those who have argued that the Great War marks a decisive break in European culture and the birth of modernism, Winter shows the ways in which traditional modes of aesthetic expression were used to make sense of the war and its grief. His book is a cultural history and a comparative history that looks beyond borders to understand European responses to the war. Emphasizing the “universality of grief and mourning,” he draws examples from low culture and high culture; indeed, arguing that the war collapsed distinctions between the two. In the conclusion, Winter suggests that the real break in

the memory of war came in the aftermath of 1945, a war that could not be processed through traditional modes.

Some relevant examples:

- Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, for the argument of change
- Abel Gance, *J'Accuse* and the return of the dead
- Tomb(s) of the Unknown Soldier
- The Cenotaph of London
- Monuments to the dead
- Ossuary at Douaumont
- The "Trench of the Bayonets"
- Kathe Köllwitz, *Grieving Parents*
- Images d'Épinal
- Otto Dix, *The War*, and the apocalyptic imagination
- Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire*, and the apocalyptic imagination
- The poetry of Apollinaire, recasting tradition
- Paul Klee, "Angelus novus" (1920) – Walter Benjamin views it as the angel of history, looking backwards on disaster

We considered some critiques:

- Against idea of "universality" of experience and "timelessness" of artistic responses
- Pointing out limits to this as a European study. Emphasis is on Britain and France
- A caricature view of tradition and modernity

George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (orig. 1938). Names and Details

Orwell's background: lower middle class, scholarship student, policeman in Burma, anti-totalitarian writer. Famous for *Animal Farm* (1944), *1984* (1949), and for his "Rules for Writers"

Goes to Spain to write about it but joins in the fight because "it seemed the only conceivable thing to do." Joins the POUM militia, fights on the Aragon front, participates in the May Events in Barcelona in 1937, back at the front he is wounded, returns to Barcelona, under threat of arrest, returns to England

A short stay in Spain, 6 or 7 months – (December 1936 to June 1937)

Wider context of the 1930s – democracy under siege, international powers respond very differently to events in Spain

Backdrop: The Spanish Second Republic, 1931-1936 (instability, the "black years" of 33-34, CEDA)

The Popular Front Government, an alliance of anarchists, socialists, communists, and liberals

Nationalists, a loose association of monarchists, army officers, fascists, and conservatives

General Mola and General Francisco Franco

Catalonia

Barcelona in December 1936 (what does it look like? Socialism in practice...)

What is socialism, according to Orwell? Not state ownership of means of production, but equality, an end to class society...

P.O.U.M. militia. Anti-Stalinist Communist militia. Motto: war and revolution are intertwined

Orwell brings English perspectives (on time, military training, railway schedules, money, and more...)

C.N.T./F.A.I. (Anarchist trade unions)

P.S.U.C. (the Communists of Catalonia). Supported by Stalin. Motto: win the war first; revolution can come later

The *Generalitat* – the Catalan government, increasingly controlled by the PSUC

The international context: the arms embargo of Britain and France, the role of Germany and Italy the Soviet Union and the Comintern

The Popular Army, organized on traditional military lines, destined to incorporate all of the militias

What does Orwell's experience of war look like?

How was Orwell's unit's first casualty taken?

What does Orwell want to do?

How well can Orwell speak Spanish? Catalan?

Propaganda in wartime... Includes propaganda by megaphone at the front (the "real weapon of war" on the Aragon front)

The May Events of Barcelona in 1937. 400 d. in fighting between the government and the militias. What are these events about? The Communist party and the government of Catalonia wanted to take control of the city and limit the role of the POUM

Distortions of the international press. For the London press – the *London Times*, the *Daily Worker* – the POUM was a front for the fascists

What is on the inside of a goatskin wine bottle?

What are Orwell's last days in Barcelona like? He's on the run, subject to arrest as a member of the POUM, sleeping outside at night, trying to help friends (such as Georges Kopp) and preparing to leave.

When (acc. to Orwell in 1937) will the English awake from "the deep, deep sleep of England"?

How might we interpret Orwell's memoir? I suggested three approaches:

- Portrait of an international crisis of the left
- A political coming of age story
- An innocent abroad

M (released 1931)

A film by Fritz Lang, great expressionist filmmaker who made films from the 1920s until the 1950s. Born in Austria, fought in WW1 on eastern front, before coming to Germany and making films. Would flee Germany and the Nazis, settling in the US where he became a naturalized citizen. He is considered a master of mystery and darkness, one of the most influential filmmakers of all time. The themes of his films – paranoia, moral ambiguity, psychological conflict – are characteristic of film noir.

M was made in 1930 and released in 1931, just as the Depression was deepening in Germany. It tells the disturbing story of a child murderer that haunts the city – and the role of the police and the underworld in tracking him down for his crimes.

Characters we discussed

- Elsie Beckmann
- Mother Beckmann
- Hans Beckert, played by Peter Lorre

- Inspector Lohmann
- Safecracker
- The thieves

Some ways we talked about the film:

- Brilliant filmmaking and storytelling – for what is not shown but suggested through images (the ball, the balloon...), for the use of sound (in this early age of sound films), for the acting of Peter Lorre, for the juxtaposition of the police and the underworld
- As a moral drama – criminality is just another manifestation of capitalism, but Beckert is viewed as an aberration
- The portrait of the public – easily misguided, quick to accuse, prone to misjudgment
- As a picture of interwar Berlin – social divisions, rich and poor, authorities and the criminal underworld
- As a portrait of the dangers of the city – and the fear of unbridled sexuality

Alternative Sources

What other kinds of themes and sources can we use to make sense of the history of Europe from 1890 to 1945? How might they complicate the stories we have told so far? Take note of what we've done and what we have not done.

For example:

- The long life of colonialism – see the British Empire, for example
- Cultural history – see fin de siècle Vienna, for example
- History of sexuality – see Weimar Germany, for example
- Visual culture – see the surrealism of “Andalusian Dog,” for example
- History of emotions – see grief in WW2 Britain, for example
- Eastern Europe – see the story of Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands*, for example