

THE LONG TWENTIETH CENTURY

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I'm trying something different this semester. Don't judge me before you hear me out. I assure you that I have received stellar student and peer evaluations in the past. These will be well-documented in my tenure file if the university exists in three years when I'm due up. But if "he MADE me read" and "professor is the kind of guy I would have a beer with" and "I appreciated his flexibility wiht [sic] deadlines" aren't sufficient evidence for you to trust that I have been a successful teacher in the past, my new assessment plan for HIST 219: The Long Twentieth Century [fulfills Humanities Core and World Cultures Core but not Writing Intensive Core, T/R 12:30-1:45] will certainly persuade you of my pedagogical acumen if not my brilliance.

Let's be frank. Students aren't reading properly. At best they scan their eyes over some of the assigned words, semi-distracted and resentful.

Students aren't writing. Technological innovation has sapped the last of student motivation to write.

Their classroom attention is divided, at best. An outright ban on phones and laptops is deemed draconian but permitting them creates too strong a temptation to ignore me.

With these conditions firmly established and, given that our world is increasingly reliant upon fast-moving technology that saps us of our humanity, I have devised an assessment plan that is designed to facilitate student learning in the face of these circumstances.

The course has only two assignments, a midterm and the final.

Attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed four absences and lose one point of their final grade with each additional absence.

'The Long Twentieth Century' begins with the American Revolution in 1775 and continues through the election of Donald Trump as the 47th president of the United States in 2024. The midterm assignment is due just before spring break after a week-long discussion of World War I. The first half covers, the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, the Opium Wars in China, the American Civil War, the pogroms against Jewish people in the Russian Empire, the Herero and Nama genocide, the Armenian Genocide, among other topics.

For the midterm, students will select one time period or event covered in the course and produce a scream that encapsulates its horror. Screams should be at least five seconds long and no longer than forty-five seconds. Screams will be assessed on pitch, intensity, and force. No extra credit is awarded for tears although they will not affect the grade.

The final exam covers the second half of the course, beginning with the Treaty of Versailles and continuing through 2024 (or through the present if any world-historical events occur between the posting of the syllabus and finals. The last week of class is blocked off on the syllabus to account for this possibility). Topics covered in the second half of class include the Second World War (including the Holocaust and the dropping of nuclear weapons on Japan), revolutions in North Africa, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Cambodian Genocide, the American-backed wars in South America, the Balkan Wars, the Rwandan Genocide, the Iraq wars, among many other topics.

Students have two options for the final exam.

- (a) Students will select one time period or event covered in the second half of the course and produce a scream that encapsulates its horror. Screams should be at least five seconds long and no longer than forty-five seconds. Screams will be assessed on pitch, intensity, and force.
- (b) Students will produce a scream [with the same assessment criteria] that expresses their attitude towards the future.

Non-verbal students may take screams from recorded media and edit them into an appropriate register.

Students are encouraged to attend office hours (T/R 1:45-3:45) to practice screaming.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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