

AVAILABLE TOPICS

1. MONGOL INVASION OF CHINA

The Mongols were a people with a fundamentally different style of culture from the Song Chinese. Their empire produced radical innovations. Consider the changes introduced in East Asia in the 13th and 14th centuries. Did the Mongols damage China, creating a need for the Ming to undo their work, or did they lay the groundwork for later Ming successes? Consider economic, social, and cultural factors as well as the political.

Books on the Mongol Empire will obviously be useful, and books on the Ming Dynasty will often look back to what it replaced. Possibilities: Edward Dryer, *Early Ming China* (1982); Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (2001).

2. THE BLACK DEATH

The Black Death was a universal calamity in the 14th century, but while Asia and the Islamic World recovered rapidly, forming new and powerful empires, Europe remained fractured. What factors are most important in preventing a European empire rising from the rubble of the calamitous 14th century?

William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (1972) has a section on the Black Death and its different effects. Barbara Tuchman's study of the 14th century, *A Distant Mirror* (1978), covers the social and political effects of the plague in Europe.

3. REFORMATION

It's easy it is to find fault with the way things are, but difficult to agree on a replacement. Explore how the Protestant movement fractured into so many separate sects. Did the fractures result more from differing religious beliefs, such as those on communion, or from the impact regional and national differences?

Suggested references: R.W. Scribner, *The Reformation in a National Context* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) and the more recent R.W. Scribner and C. Scott Dixon, *The German Reformation: Second Edition* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); *The European Reformations* by Carter Lindberg (Blackwell, 1996). For Calvin: *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* by Alistair E. McGrath (Blackwell, 1993); *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* by William J. Bouwsma (Oxford, 1989). For Luther: *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521* by Martin Brecht (Augsburg Fortress, 1993). For Zwingli: *For God and His People: Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation* by Jean Henri Merle D'Aubigne (BJU, 2000). Original writings of these reformers should be consulted as primary sources.

4. THE OTTOMANS

Consider the driving forces of the creation of the Ottoman Empire. Which came first — the Ottoman Turks building an empire, which could be a center of Sunni Islamic authority, or a religious movement catalyzing the development of an empire to support it? How do these factors interplay as the empire develops?

There are many books on the Ottomans, including Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream* (2005); consider also books on Islamic history, which will tell the tale from a different perspective, e.g., Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (1974).

5. CONQUISTADOR AND AZTEC

What was the Conquistadors' perception of the Aztecs: Did they see them as barbarians, or as a civilization like their own? Was Cortes's goal in conquering Mesoamerica different from the way in which European powers dealt with other European powers?

Cortes's own correspondence is a crucial primary source here. Secondary works include Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico* (1993) and Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters* (1986).

6. ABSOLUTISM

Explore Louis XIV's understanding of absolutism as a political system. What did he believe were its uses? How did he set about constructing it? Did he see it as the means to other goals or as an end in itself? Was Louis's version of absolutism different from the practices of other absolutist rulers?

William Beik, *Louis XIV and Absolutism: A Brief Study with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1999) is crucial for this topic. Consider also the more intensive book from the same author, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* by William Beik (Cambridge University Press, 1989). Some insight can also be gleaned from members of the court: for example *Saint-Simon and the Court of Louis XIV* by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (University Of Chicago, 2001). Other studies include *The Birth of Absolutism: A History of France, 1598-1661* by Yves-Marie Berce (Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).

7. ENLIGHTENMENT

Voltaire is probably the best-known literary figure of the Enlightenment, and his career encompassed many of the different facets of that movement. What was his vision of society, and how innovative was it? To what extent did his vision include the lot of the common people, one way or the other?

An account of Voltaire is found in Peter Gay, *Voltaire's Politics: The Poet As a Realist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959). Also: Theodore Besterman, *Voltaire* (1969). A good overview of the early Enlightenment may be found in Leonard Krieger, *Kings and Philosophers, 1689–1989* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1970). Part 1 of Krieger's book also contains a good discussion of the political/military history of the period from 1690 to 1740.

8. WOMEN IN SOCIETY

In the 18th century, the role of women in noble society seemed to open up in both Europe and China. What privileges were afforded women in each society? Were educated women "better off" in one culture or another, and how would that be defined?

Comparative studies of gender roles may help, including such books as Nancy Bonvillian, *Women and men : cultural constructs of gender* (2007). Books related to women in Qing China include Jie Tao, *Holding up half the sky : Chinese women past, present, and future* (2004) and Janet Theiss, *Disgraceful matters: the politics of chastity in eighteenth-century China* (2004); also possibly Christina Gilmartin, *Engendering China* (1994). For Europe, Paula Findlen, *Italy's eighteenth century : gender and culture in the age of the grand tour* (2009), Theresa Ann Smith, *The emerging female citizen : gender and enlightenment in Spain* (2006), and Adriana Craciun, *British women writers and the French Revolution : citizens of the world* (2005) are just a few possibilities.

9. FRENCH REVOLUTION

The period of the Thermidorian reaction and the Directory (1794– 1799) generally receives little attention. But some argue it is the most important period because the wars altered the nature of the Revolution. Do you agree? Did the Directory change the course of the Revolution, and if so, how?

Begin with a broad history of the Revolution, such as William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) or Donald Sutherland, *France, 1789–1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), to obtain an overview of Thermidor and the Directory. A useful source for more detailed information is Denis Woronoff, *The Thermidorean Regime and the Directory, 1794–1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Other good sources include Martyn Lyons, *France under the Directory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); and Colin Lewis and Gwynne Lewis, eds., *Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History, 1794–1815* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

10. ROMANTICISM

Romanticism normally involves the celebration of nature, nationalism, and the untamable; but the Romantic poets did not live or write in a vacuum, and many of them were highly critical of the society in which they lived. Read Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Lines Written during the Castlereagh Administration," "Similes for Two Political Characters of 1819," "Song to the Men of England," "Sonnet: England 1819," "The Mask of Anarchy," "Ode to Liberty," "Sonnet: To the Republic of Benevento," "Written on Hearing the News of the Death of Napoleon," all written between 1819 and 1821; OR study William Wordsworth's "1801 I Grieved for Buonaparte," "London. 1802," "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic," "The World is Too Much With Us," and "Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland." Have these poets strayed from their Romantic ideals, or do you see evidence of them in these political charged pieces?

See *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol. II (Blackmask Online, 2002); Jack Stillinger, ed., *Selected Poems and Prefaces by William Wordsworth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Riverside Eds, 1965).

11. UNFREE LABOR

Compare serfdom in Russia with slavery in the United States. Consider living and working conditions of serfs with those of slaves; OR investigate the possibilities for gaining freedom in the period before emancipation in each country; OR compare the impact of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with that of Ivan Turgenev's *A Hunter's Sketches*; OR examine the realities of the period after emancipation as experienced by serfs and slaves.

Countless works on serfs and on American slavery exist, so choose works that speak to the specific issues you want to address. Comparative works on serfs and slaves are also available. You may wish to begin with Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1987).

12. REVOLUTIONS OF 1848

Choose one of the countries experiencing a revolution in 1848. What were the chief causes of this revolution, and how was it different from the others? OR, choose a neighboring country in which revolution did not occur in 1848. Why didn't it?

In addition to the books cited in the chapter bibliography (textbook p. 870), see also Peter N. Stearns, *1848: The Revolutionary Tide in Europe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974); and the collection edited by Robert Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848–49* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). On France, see Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848–1852* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); John M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848–1851* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); and Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). For Germany, see Wolfram Siemann, *The German Revolution of 1848–1849* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); and Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848–1849* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

13. REALPOLITIK

Reflect on why Bismarck might be considered the greatest or the most important individual in nineteenth-century Europe. The emphasis in the essay should consist not on what he accomplished (although a brief review of his more important activities is in order), but on the significance of his acts. What was his impact on Germany and, through Germany, on the rest of Europe? Does he deserve top billing for the 19th century?

A number of books exist on 19th century Germany and German nationalism, including: Schulze, Hagen. *The course of German nationalism : from Frederick the Great to Bismarck, 1763-1867* (translated by Sarah Hanbury-Tenison). (New York : Cambridge U Press, 1991). Bismarck's memoirs also exist: Bismarck, Otto, *The memoirs, being the reflections and reminiscences of Otto, Prince von Bismarck, written and dictated by himself after his retirement from office* (trans. A. J. Butler). (New York, H. Fertig, 1966.).

14. INDIAN NATIONALISM

Some have said that nationalism in South Asia originates in large part with the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Is this a valid assessment — does it begin a process of shared identity, or is this moment better placed earlier or later in Indian history? Are the uprising and its effects — including European reaction — helpful or harmful to the various peoples of South Asia?

Major secondary sources include Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt* (1984) and Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983), as well as Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993).

15. WORLD IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I

As a “total war,” World War I had a lasting impact on the home front. Choose any world country and explore the political, economic, social, and cultural changes that took place in their chosen nation during the war. What was the outstanding effect of the war?

Sources for Europe include Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986); Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870–1970* (New York: St. Martin's, 1983); Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society, 1914–1918* (New York: Berg, 1984); Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965); John Williams, *The Other Battleground: The Home Fronts: Britain, France and Germany, 1914–1918* (Chicago: Henry Regency, 1972); and J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

16. ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

Write an essay on the cold war as it developed in 1947. Do not merely recount what happened in 1947 but try to sort out the more important from the less important events. What caused President Truman to proclaim the Truman Doctrine? Was there a connection between the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan? What led to the formation of the COMINFORM (Communist Information Bureau)? Finally, did 1947 mark the beginning of the cold war? Explain why.

In addition to material in the chapter bibliography (textbook pp. 1135-36), you may wish to look at some of the documents in Edward H. Judge and John W. Langdon, eds., *The Cold War: A History through Documents* (Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), and perhaps Chapter 3 of Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917– 1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).