

Position Paper Topics

SHAPING OF THE MODERN WORLD
CORE 2.2 WILSON SUMMER 2010

1. 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 U 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 Alister 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.

2. ASTROLOGY AND MAGIC

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, astrology was being practiced at the highest levels of society. Research the work of people like Dr. John Dee in the English court and Nostradamus in the French court. Leave aside modern attitudes toward astrology and evaluate their work on its own terms: Were they practicing a craft that looked ahead to science, or backward to witchcraft and superstition? (Be sure to define what you mean by "science.")

Reference starters: Gerald Suster, *John Dee* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2003); Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror: The Science and Magic of Dr. John Dee, Advisor to Queen Elizabeth I* (Henry Holt & Co., 2001); and Damon Wilson, *The Mammoth Book of Nostradamus and Other Prophets* (London: Robinson, 1999).

3. 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 U 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 (U Of Chicago, 2001). Other studies include *The Birth of Absolutism: A History of France, 1598-1661* by Yves-Marie Berce (Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).

4. 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 U 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.

5. BALANCE OF POWER

The War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War, taken together, produced significant changes in the European balance of power. How did these wars affect the relative standing on the European stage of one of the following major powers: Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, or Russia? What factor did the leaders' personalities play?

It shouldn't be hard to find books about these wars, such as Kaplan, Herbert H. *Russia and the outbreak of the Seven Years' War* (Berkeley, U of California Press, 1968); Sherrard, Owen Aubrey, *Lord Chatham: Pitt and the Seven Years' War* ([London] Bodley Head [1955]); Frederick II, *Frederick the Great on the Art of War* (ed. and trans. Jay Luvaas, 1999); and so on.

6. 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 U Press, 1989) or Donald Sutherland, *France, 1789–1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (Oxford: Oxford U 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 U Press, 1984). Other good sources include Martyn Lyons, *France under the Directory* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1975); and Colin Lewis and Gwynne Lewis, eds., *Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History, 1794–1815* (Cambridge U Press, 1983).

7. 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. Choose 3 or more works by Percy Bysshe Shelley OR by William Wordsworth that comment on current events. Have these poets strayed from their Romantic ideals?

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). Relevant Shelley poems might include: "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"; Wordsworth's might include "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."

8. 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 U Press, 2000). On France, see Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848–1852* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1983); John M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848–1851* (New Haven, CT: Yale U Press, 1978); and Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton: Princeton U 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 U Press, 1991).

9. UNFREE LABOR

Compare serfdom in Russia with slavery in the U.S. 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 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).

10. 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? What was the secret of his success?

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.).

11. POLITICAL ANTISEMITISM

Explore the Dreyfus Affair in detail and how it demonstrated divisions within France. Does the Affair reflect military attitudes in particular, or broader anti-Semitism in French or European society?

Sources on this topic include Jean Denis Bredin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus* (New York: George Braziller, 1986); Martin Phillip Johnson, *The Dreyfus Affair: Honor and Politics in the Belle Époque* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1999); and Michael Burns, *France and the Dreyfus Affair: A Documentary History* (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1999).

12. IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I

As a "total war," World War I had a lasting impact on the home front. Choose one European 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 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 U Press, 1986).

13. EXPERIENCING THE HOLOCAUST

Compare and contrast the diaries of Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum, allowing for the differences in age, background, and experience between the two authors. Consider whether the writing of one author or the other is more useful to us, now, in understanding the Holocaust. Compare accounts given in the diaries with what we know of the Holocaust from other sources.

Sources will be the two books in question, plus appropriate analysis from secondary sources. There are a couple of books that address Holocaust memoirs, including Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *Writings as Resistance*.

14. 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 U Press, 1998).

15. THE SPACE RACE

Reflect on the meaning of the space race and on its accomplishments. Was it merely an extension of the cold war, or did it speak to larger purposes? Was it money well spent and time and energy used wisely? Does humanity somehow need this kind of enterprise periodically? Explain why or why not.

One starting place for the space race is Walter A. McDougall, *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age* (New York: Basic Books, 1985). Other useful sources include David Baker, *Conquest: A History of Space Achievements from Science Fiction to the Shuttle* (Salem, NH: Salem House, 1984); and Phillip Clark, *The Soviet Manned Space Program: An Illustrated History of the Men, the Missions, and the Spacecraft* (New York: Orion Books, 1988). James Harford, *Korolev: How One Man Masterminded the Soviet Drive to Beat America to the Moon* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997) uses Russian sources and is the best biography in English of this important figure.