

20th Century World HIST 155

Spring 2026 Section 01 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/07/2026

The 20th century was a time of revolutionary scientific and technological advancement and social change, but it was also a time of extreme violence and ideological contention. Focusing on a variety of creative works of human expression (including feature films, a dystopian novel and historical proclamations), this course examines the recently ended century from a global perspective. Key questions in this class include the following: if the 20th century was so modern, why was it so violent? How have science and technology changed who we are and how we relate to each other? Why do we buy things made in distant places...and so what that we do? How and why have some resisted the promises of modernity? Is globalization really another example of western imperialism--or are we participating in a new, truly global era?

In this course, students will receive an appreciation for human expression in cultures outside the U.S. and an understanding of how that expression has developed over time. Additionally, students will understand how traditions of cultures outside the U.S. have influenced American cultures.

Contact Information

Instructor:	Prof. Allison Katsev
Office Location:	DMH 140
Telephone:	408-924-5508
Email:	allison.katsev@sjsu.edu Please, feel free to e-mail me or come to office hours with any questions you have, big or small!
Office Hours:	Thursday, 1:30pm-2:30pm Also via email and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	TuTh, 10:30AM-11:45AM
Classroom:	DMH 164
GE Area:	Area V: Cultures and Global Understanding

Course Description and Requisites

Global perspectives on a century of scientific progress that also saw the violent deaths of millions, with emphasis on the decline of traditional imperialism and the ideological contention that led to World War II and the Cold War.

GE Area(s): V. Cultures and Global Understanding

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

You are expected to arrive to class on time. Do not use cellphones, texting, or email in class.

Course Format

This class will be taught in person. During class, I will introduce material and students will participate in active discussion and analysis of the material.

Class Communications

Course materials (the syllabus, guidelines for assignments) may be found on the course website on Canvas. I will communicate with students by email, through Canvas. You are responsible for regularly checking email for important messages about the class.

☐ Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area V: Cultures and Global Understanding

SJSU Studies courses -- Areas R, S, and V -- help students integrate knowledge between and among disciplines. Courses in Area V: Cultures and Global Understanding examine multiple aspects of human expression in cultures and societies outside the United States, including how such cultures develop and influence one another as well as U.S. cultures and societies.

GE Area V Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area V course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze historical, social, and/or cultural significance of creative works of human expression (examples include, but are not limited to, written works, images, media, music, dance, technologies, designs), from at least one cultural tradition outside the United States (assessed through essay question on second midterm exam);
2. Examine how creative works of human expression [as defined in #1] outside the United States have influenced the United States' cultures (assessed through essay question on first midterm exam);
3. Explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external influences (assessed through first writing assignment);
4. Appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices (assessed through final exam and class discussions).

Students are strongly encouraged to satisfy GE Areas R, S, and V with courses from departments other than the major department.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO's)

In addition to the above GE Area V Learning Outcomes , upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO 1: Demonstrate an understanding of key global trends of the 20th century (assessed through discussion, quiz, two midterm exams and two writing assignments).

CLO 2: Identify the interests, experiences and responses of diverse peoples, and analyze these differences through relevant cultural and historical contexts (assessed through discussion, two midterm exams, and two writing assignments).

CLO 3: Use a range of creative works of human expression to write an evidence-based essay that is grammatical, clear, concise, coherent and properly cited (assessed through the second writing assignment).

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 3000 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline (through essay responses on two midterm exams, two extended writing assignments, and a final exam). Writing will be evaluated and feedback will be focused on both content and form. Students will have ample opportunities to receive feedback on drafts and revise their essays. The first writing assignment includes a draft due for peer review and feedback from the professor. There will be a class devoted to feedback on writing from the professor before the second writing assignment is due. In addition, I encourage all students to email me with questions about their writing. I am happy at any time to read students' drafts and meet with them in person or over zoom to give extensive feedback.

Diversity Goals and Content

This course will include issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. In this course we will not only focus on the diverse experiences of people from different regions in the world, but we will closely consider intersectionality (for example, the experience of British imperialism by a young West African woman) (CLO 2). Throughout the course, we will be attentive to dominant narratives, the marginalization of individuals and groups, and ways to deconstruct these narratives and systems of oppression. Class discussions will foster open-mindedness and collaboration.

Course Materials

Required Texts/Readings

ALL are available for purchase through the Spartan Bookstore or their website.

NOTE: *The Travels of a T-Shirt* and *World History: A Concise Thematic Analysis* are available for free online via the [Library Course Materials](#) link on our Canvas website.

Abina and The Important Men: A Graphic History

Author: Getz, Trevor, and Liz Clarke

Publisher: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024

Edition: third edition

ISBN: 9780197762189

Availability: Campus Bookstore

First and second edition are also fine.

The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy

Author: Rivoli, Pietra

Publisher: Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: 2014

Edition: Second
ISBN: 9781118950142
Availability: Campus Bookstore

First edition is also fine. Also available for free at the Library Course Materials link on our course website.

World History: A Concise Thematic Analysis, Volume 2

Author: Wallech, Steven, Touraj Daryaei, Craig Hendricks, Anne Lynne Negus, Peter P. Wan, and Gordon Morris Bakken
Publisher: Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013
Edition: Second
ISBN: 9781118532720
Availability: Campus Bookstore

Also available for free through the Library Course Materials link on our course website.

We.

Author: Zamyatin, Yevgeny
Publisher: New York, Penguin Books, 1993
Edition: Trans. by Clarence Brown
ISBN: 9780140185850
Availability: Campus Bookstore

It's fine to use any edition and any translation of this book.

Course Requirements and Assignments

1) WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1

ROUGH DRAFT (HARD COPY) DUE FEBRUARY 5 AT BEGINNING OF CLASS. We will do peer review during class on February 5, and I will discuss with each student their plans for revisions. (You can also email me with questions about your writing or meet with me to get additional feedback on your draft.)

FINAL VERSION DUE WEDNESDAY, February 11, AT 11:59 PM (One page double-spaced (300-400 words); electronic copy submitted on Canvas). (7% of grade). Using *Abina and the Important Men*, explain Judge Melton's verdict in Abina's case (focus on 1--or at most 2--reasons). [Link to detailed guidelines posted on Canvas \(https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365465\).](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365465)

This assignment requires you to explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external influences (GE ALO 3); demonstrate an understanding of key global trends of the 20th century (CLO 1); and identify the interests, experiences and responses of diverse peoples, and analyze these differences through relevant cultural and historical contexts (CLO 2).

2) QUIZ ON THEME I

FEBRUARY 5 IN CLASS: Multiple choice and short answer questions on basic information from lectures and reading. (3% of grade). [Link to quiz study guide posted on Canvas \(https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593941\)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593941).

This quiz requires you to demonstrate an understanding of key global trends of the 20th century (CLO 1).

3) MIDTERM EXAMS

MARCH 10 (20% of grade) AND APRIL 9 (20% of grade): Short answer and multiple choice questions, reading questions (in the first midterm exam) and extended essays covering the theme of the past weeks. Details are posted on-line to guide your reading and help you prepare for the exams. BRING ONE LARGE GREENBOOK. NO NOTES OR BOOKS, EXCEPT, IF YOU'D LIKE, YOU CAN ALSO BRING A PIECE OF NOTEBOOK PAPER (8 X 11) WITH HANDWRITTEN NOTES ON BOTH SIDES THAT YOU'LL TURN IN WITH THE EXAM. Because you will be given one of the essay questions for Part 2 of the first midterm exam ahead of time to prepare, you can include on your note paper notes and an outline for that essay question, but you can't include a fully written out essay.

The first midterm exam will require you to examine how creative works of human expression outside the United States have influenced the United States' cultures (GE ALO 2). The second midterm exam will require you to analyze historical, social, and/or cultural significance of a creative work of human expression from a cultural tradition outside the United States (GE ALO 1). Both midterm exams will require you to demonstrate an understanding of key global trends of the 20th century (CLO 1) and identify the interests, experiences and responses of diverse peoples, and analyze these differences through relevant cultural and historical contexts (CLO 2).

*STUDY GUIDE FOR THE FIRST MIDTERM EXAM (MAR. 10)
(<https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593937>), posted on Canvas

*STUDY GUIDE FOR THE SECOND MIDTERM EXAM (APR. 9)
(<https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593938>), posted on Canvas

4) WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2

DUE SATURDAY, MAY 9, AT 11:59 PM ON CANVAS (5-6 PAGES, 1250-1500 words); (20% of grade): You will choose one of the key questions for the class and answer it using at least three of the sources (assigned readings, historical documents handed out in class, or films or film clips watch in class) we've used this semester. This essay will be turned in on Canvas at the scheduled start of the final exam. [Link to guidelines \(https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593943\)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593943), posted on Canvas.

This essay will require you to demonstrate an understanding of key global trends of the 20th century (CLO 1); identify the interests, experiences and responses of diverse peoples, and analyze these differences through relevant cultural and historical contexts (CLO 2); and use a range of creative works

of human expression to write an evidence-based essay that is grammatical, clear, concise, coherent and properly cited (CLO 3).

5) Final Exam

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 10:45AM-12:45PM, DMH 164 (5% of grade): The final exam will consist of one reflection question in which students will choose from a list of films and written works we analyzed this semester and reflect on what that work suggests about roles that works of culture play in our lives. [A study guide with the exam question is posted on Canvas.](#) BRING ONE LARGE GREEN BOOK. NO NOTES OR BOOKS, EXCEPT, IF YOU'D LIKE, YOU CAN ALSO BRING A PIECE OF NOTEBOOK PAPER (8 X 11) WITH HANDWRITTEN NOTES ON BOTH SIDES THAT YOU'LL TURN IN WITH THE EXAM. **Because you are being given the exam question ahead of time to prepare, you can include on your notebook paper notes and an outline, but not a fully written out essay.**

The final exam will require you to appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices (GE ALO 4).

[STUDY GUIDE FOR FINAL EXAM,](#)

<https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593936>, posted on Canvas.

6) CLASS PARTICIPATION INCLUDING HOMEWORK

(25% of grade): You should come to class having done the assigned reading and even prepared questions of your own. If two chapters are assigned together, you should do all the reading before the first lecture. You should also have with you all of the readings due that day. Even if a class is listed as "lecture," if time permits we will discuss issues raised in my presentation. Take advantage of opportunities to participate actively in the class. Excellent ways of contributing to the class: listening carefully to others, sharing your ideas, asking questions, responding to others' thoughts, participating in small group activities. A key goal of class participation is to foster open-mindedness and collaboration. Participation will also help you develop and demonstrate an understanding of key global trends of the 20th century (CLO 1); identify the interests, experiences and responses of diverse peoples, and analyze these differences through relevant cultural and historical contexts (CLO 2); appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices (GE ALO 4).

HOMEWORK: In addition to assigned readings, exams, and essays, you have two other assignments. These two assignments will be wrapped into your participation grade. **DUE FEBRUARY 5:** Rough draft of first writing assignment. **DUE MAY 5:** One page write-up (250 words) on the travels of something you own. Also, you should be prepared to share your findings with members of the class. [Link to detailed guidelines \(https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593940\)](#), posted on Canvas.

This course focuses on learning through active engagement. If you have circumstances beyond your control that lead to you missing many classes, please talk to me as soon as possible so we can decide what sort of adjustments are appropriate for you to make up your participation.

Writing Resources

Students will receive detailed feedback on their writing, and are encouraged to contact me to discuss their assignments at any point, from brainstorming ideas to writing final drafts. In addition, the Writing Center (<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>) is an excellent resource for helping students at any stage in their writing. The Center provides group and one-on-one tutoring sessions, workshops on a wide array of writing topics, and online resources like videos and handouts for self-study.

✓ Grading Information

Grades on assignments will be regularly updated on Canvas. You can always email with questions about your current grade.

Weighting of Assignments

Assignment Activity	GE ALO's Assessed	CLO's Assessed	Percentage of Grade
Exams	1, 2, 4	1,2	45%
Quiz		1	3%
Papers	3	1,2,3	27%
Participation	4	1, 2	25%

Policy on Late Work: Late papers will be marked down 1/3 grade for each day late. For example, a B will be reduced to a B- if turned in one day late. I do not grant extensions except in cases of unforeseeable circumstances. If such circumstances arise, you should contact me immediately. For the second essay, in order to get grades in at the end of the semester, I will not accept any papers after the time of the final exam except in truly unforeseeable circumstances. If such circumstances arise, you must contact me immediately.

Policy on Use of AI Programs: This is a course that teaches critical thinking and developing arguments based on evidence. Therefore the use of AI programs (such as ChatGPT) is not allowed. Using an AI program to do the thinking for you is plagiarism. Using an AI program as a source that you cite is also

unacceptable as AI programs are neither reliable nor do they accurately cite the sources of their information.

Because one way of honing critical thinking is developing one's skills at expressing arguments in writing, **the use of AI writing programs such as Grammarly Pro is not allowed.** Programs that check for basic issues in grammar and spelling (such as the free Grammarly program) are permitted.

“Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.”

Anonymized student work might be used in a regular cycle of General Education Program assessment. Students can request to exclude their work from the process by emailing the professor.

Breakdown

Grade	Range	Notes
A+	97% to 100%	
A	93% to 96.99%	
A-	90% to 92.99%	
B+	87% to 89.99%	
B	83% to 86.99%	
B-	80% to 82.99%	
C+	77% to 79.99%	
C	73% to 76.99%	
C-	70% to 72.99%	
D+	67% to 69.99%	
D	63% to 66.99%	
D-	60% to 62.99%	
F	Below 60%	

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

When	Topic	Notes
Jan. 22	Introduction: Making Sense of the World in the Twentieth Century	
THEME I: THE WEST IN THE WORLD		USE FOR READING QUESTIONS FOR ABINA (THEME I) The Guidelines for Writing Assignment #1 (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365465), posted on Canvas
Jan. 27	(Lecture) Narratives of "Progress:" The Industrial Revolution and the Rise of the West	Reading: START READING ABINA, due Feb. 3 (optional reading: <i>World History</i> , p.478-482, and ch. 22)
Jan. 29	(Lecture) Ideologies and Realities of Imperialism in the Late 19th Century	Reading: CON'T READING ABINA (optional reading: <i>World History</i> , chs. 25-26)
Feb. 3	(Discussion) Abina and the Important Men	Reading: FINISH READING ABINA
Feb. 5	QUIZ ON THEME I; AND DRAFT OF ESSAY 1 DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS	*Multiple Choice and Short Answer test on material from lecture and details from Abina; *Peer review of essay on Abina
THEME II: WAR AND PEACE		LINK TO READING QUESTIONS FOR WORLD HISTORY TEXTBOOK (THEME II) (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365139).

When	Topic	Notes
Feb. 10	(Lecture) World War I	Reading: <i>World History</i> , Ch. 27
WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE ON CANVAS WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11, 11:59 PM		Link to guidelines for Writing Assignment #1 (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365139) , posted on Canvas
Feb. 12	(Lecture) Promising Alternatives After War	Reading: <i>World History</i> , Ch. 28-29
Feb. 17	(Lecture) Another World War	Reading: <i>World History</i> , Ch. 31
Feb. 19	(Lecture) After WWII: The Cold War and Decolonization	Reading: <i>World History</i> , Chs. 30, 32
Feb. 24	FILM: The Lives of Others (2006)	Reading: Time to catch up on <i>World History</i> .
Feb. 26	FILM: The Lives of Others (con't)	Reading: Time to catch up on <i>World History</i>
Mar. 3	(Lecture) After the Cold War: A New Peaceful World Order? AND Discussion of Lives of Others	Reading: <i>World History</i> , Chs. 33
Mar. 5	Open office hours; time to study for midterm exam	
Mar. 10	Mid-Term Exam (20% of course grade).	<p>Bring 1 large green book. You can have an 8 X 11 piece of notebook paper with handwritten notes on both sides. <u>Because you will be given one of the essay questions for Part 2 ahead of time to prepare, you can include on your note paper notes and an outline for that essay question, but you can't include a fully written out essay.</u></p> <p>See detailed description of midterm exam and how to study for it here: Midterm Exam (Theme II) Study Guide (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593937).</p>

When	Topic	Notes
THEME III: UTOPIAN DREAMS		LINK TO READING QUESTIONS FOR ZAMYATIN, WE (THEME III) (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365109).
Mar. 12	(Lecture) In Search of Class Harmony: Worker and Peasant Revolutions	Reading: Start Zamyatin, <i>We</i> (due April 7)
Mar. 17	(Lecture) In Search of Ethnic Purity: Germany, Rwanda and Genocide	Reading: Continue reading Zamyatin, <i>We</i>
Mar. 19	(Lecture) Revolutions in the Name of Religion	Reading: Continue reading Zamyatin, <i>We</i> .
Mar. 24	FILM: Persepolis (2007)	Reading: Continue reading Zamyatin, <i>We</i>
Mar. 26	FILM/Discussion: Persepolis (2007)	Reading: Continue reading Zamyatin, <i>We</i>
Mar. 31-Apr. 2	SPRING BREAK	
Apr. 7	(Discussion) Zamyatin, <i>We</i>	Reading: Finish reading Zamyatin, <i>We</i>
Apr. 9	Mid-Term Exam (20% of course grade)	Bring 1 large green book. You can have an 8 X 11 piece of notebook paper with handwritten notes on both sides. See detailed description of midterm exam and how to study for it here: Midterm Exam (Theme III) Study Guide (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593938).
THEME IV: IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL		LINK TO READING QUESTIONS FOR TRAVEL OF A T-SHIRT (THEME IV) (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365107).
Apr. 14	(Lecture) "Western Science" and the World	Reading: Start reading <i>Travels of a T-Shirt</i> (due Apr. 28)

When	Topic	Notes
Apr. 16	(Lecture) The Rise of Consumerism: A World of Shoppers?	Reading: Continue reading <i>Travels of a T-Shirt</i>
Apr. 21	(Lecture) The Rise of Human Rights and Humanitarianism	Reading: Continue reading <i>Travels of a T-Shirt</i>
Apr. 23	(Lecture) The Future of Democracy	Reading: Continue reading <i>Travels of a T-Shirt</i>
Apr. 28	(Discussion) Rivoli, The Travels of a T-Shirt	Reading: Finish <i>The Travels of a T-Shirt</i>
Apr. 30	(Lecture) Testing World Orders: North Korea...	No new reading
May 5	(Presentations/Write-Up)—The Travels of your.....?	DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS. A one-page write up on some item you own (Link to guidelines (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/files?preview=85365501) , posted at course website). <u>Be prepared to share your findings in class.</u>
May 7	Conclusions: Lessons of the Twentieth Century?	
Writing Assignment #2, Due on Canvas Saturday, May 9, 11:59 pm	Writing Assignment #2	<u>DUE SATURDAY, MAY 9, 11:59 PM ON CANVAS</u> - A 5-6 page (1250-1500 word) essay in which you choose one of the key questions for the class and answer it using <u>at least three of the sources (assigned readings, historical documents handed out in class, or film or film clips we've watched)</u> we've used this semester. Link to detailed guidelines (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593943) , posted on Canvas.

When	Topic	Notes
FINAL EXAM Thursday, May 14, 10:45AM- 12:45AM DMH 164		<p>Bring 1 large green book. You can have an 8 X 11 piece of notebook paper with handwritten notes on both sides. <u>Because you are being given the exam question ahead of time to prepare, you can include on your notebook paper notes and an outline, but not a fully written out essay.</u></p> <p>See the precise prompt for the final exam and detailed description of expectations here:</p> <p>STUDY GUIDE TO FINAL EXAM (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620799/assignments/7593936).</p>