

## **Interpreting the 20th Century: The Struggle Over Democracy**

(48 lectures, 30 minutes/lecture)

Course No. 8090

Taught by [Pamela Radcliff](#)

University of California at San Diego

Ph.D., Columbia University

The 20th century transformed the political, social, and economic structures of the world in ways no one could have imagined as the 1800s came to a close.

It was a time of intense and rapid change that stretches the capacity of the imagination: first flight and space flight, the Manhattan Project and the Welfare State, Nietzsche and Freud, the Great Depression and inflation, moving pictures and home computers, the Cold War and terrorism—and war and peace.

"The level of change experienced over a 100-year period is what most defines the 20th century," states Professor Pamela Radcliff.

Even today, more than a century later, that transformation is far from complete. The nations of the third world, at last free from the colonialism and imperialism that once marked their relationship with the West, are still caught up in the even more complex search for politically stable democracy and economic prosperity.

### **Today's World: Emerging from 100 Years of Ideas and Events**

**Interpreting the 20th Century: The Struggle Over Democracy** is a comprehensive 48-lecture examination of this extraordinary period.

It is a course designed around history's ideas as much as its events, revealing how those ideas both influenced events and were in turn influenced by them to shape today's world.

It is a unique opportunity to gain a multidisciplinary understanding of how the modern world came to be and how democracy has emerged as a political ideal, although the parameters of a truly democratic world order are still being vigorously contested.

The subject's very nature demands not only an ability to distill political and economic trends from a century of world history, but to explain them with clarity, drawing on other disciplines as necessary to make key points come alive.

Professor Pamela Radcliff defines the perspective of the course as including what she calls the "Enlightenment Project"—the adoption of liberal, democratic, rationalist principles in much of the world—while emphasizing the unresolved nature of the struggle for democracy.

She concentrates on keeping the big picture extremely clear as she moves across whole eras, entire continents, and disciplines as specialized as international trade balances and movements in literature and art.

She consistently shows all sides of an issue when scholars are divided in their opinions and she makes generous use of primary sources, frequently quoting from those sources to ensure that her lectures convey the richest possible sense of each subject.

Professor Radcliff (Ph.D., Columbia University) is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of California at San Diego, where she has won both the Distinguished Teaching Award and Eleanor Roosevelt College Excellence in Teaching Award for her undergraduate teaching.

To make the tremendous breadth of the course comprehensible, Professor Radcliff presents it chronologically in seven sections best representing this struggle:

**Section 1** is an introduction to the 20th century, which most scholars now mark from 1914 and the beginning of World War I.

**Section 2** consists of the various crises faced by the West in the years between the wars.

**Section 3** covers the challenge to democracy presented by fascism and communism, including the different approaches to the totalitarian state represented by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

**Section 4** discusses external challenges to western power from China, India, Mexico, and Japan.

**Section 5** explores World War II, including the Holocaust and the rise of existentialism in post-war Europe.

**Section 6** examines the post-World War II world order, including the Cold War, the changing relationship between science and the state, and the rise of the welfare state.

**Section 7** concludes the course with a discussion of the challenges of development in a decolonizing world.

### **Explore a Broad Range of Ideas in Depth**

You cover topics in detail as varied as:

- the "crisis of meaning" unleashed by World War I that challenged the political, cultural, and economic values of Western Europe and set the stage for decades of turmoil
- the differing approaches of fascism and communism to organizing and mobilizing the masses
- how different kinds of art provided a window into the psychological forces swirling through public life.

This course's intellectual breadth and vigor isn't reflected in lofty overview, but in vivid, ground-level history that lets you see those forces at *work* in:

- the trenches of World War I: where new technologies created a level of carnage unparalleled in history
- the theatrical action of Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot*, turning away from the hope of a salvation in a post-Holocaust world to seek dignity in individual struggle
- the collective ability of a disillusioned generation here in the United States and around the world—protesting over the Vietnam war or inequality of education or the lack of gay rights—to transform political culture and the nature of democratic debate
- the march through a dazzling variety of the famous, infamous and lesser-known figures who shaped and reflected the century 's tumultuous events and changes, such as Samuel Becket, Marcel Duchamps, Frantz Fanon, Vladimir Lenin, Sigmund Freud, Alexandra Kollontai, Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, Mahatma Gandhi, Mao Tse-tung, Mikhail Gorbachev, Emiliano Zapata, Theodor Herzl, Kwame Nkrumah, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Ideas Come Alive through Detailed Case Studies**

And for an even closer focus, the course also includes several lectures devoted to detailed case studies that illustrate how the differing models covered in the course have been translated into actual practice in post-colonial nations.

You see, for example, how the developmental model put into effect in Communist China differs from that used in Democratic India—and why—and the different results achieved in two countries that began their developmental process with very similar problems.

And see how they both differ from the authoritarian model that has been put into place in Japan.

Similarly, you'll get a chance to see three different models of feminism that have resulted from the global women's movement:

- women organizing specifically around their status as mothers, as in the "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" who alerted the world to Argentina's "disappeared"
- the "everyday resistance" model linked to the world's poorest and least empowered women such as those in India's southwestern state of Tamil Nadu
- the more familiar model of "equal rights" feminism seen here in the United States.

Plus, you frequently venture off the pathways of geopolitics or national revolution as you view the course's issues through different lenses.

In Lecture 5, for example, you'll encounter Dadaists, Surrealists, and Futurist artists as they turn the ideas of Freud and Nietzsche into a chaotic post-World War I attack on the certainty, rationality, and objectivity of the 19th-century Western culture they felt had betrayed them.

In examining paintings by artists like Hannah Hoch or Otto Dix, or hearing the searing command of the Futurist Manifesto to "leave good sense behind us like a hideous husk," you understand the mood of an artistic world desperately trying to reject the past and steer a course towards what had to be a more promising future.

### **The Challenge of Defining Democracy**

The main issue you address in this course, according to Professor Radcliff, is still a work in progress.

"Even after the better part of a century, the world's nations are still trying to define what real democracy is and how to establish it—not only within nations but *between* them as well, in the sense of fostering and sustaining relationships based on equality and not on raw power," she notes.

It is an extraordinary process that we continue to watch.

## Course Lecture Titles

### Part 1

1. Framing the 20th Century
2. The Opening Act—World War I
3. Framing the Peace—The Paris Peace Treaties
4. Intellectual Foundations—Nietzsche and Freud
5. Art and the Post-War "Crisis of Meaning"
6. Gender Crisis—The "Woman Question"
7. The Origins of "Mass Society"
8. Defining Mass Society and Its Consequences
9. Crisis of Capitalism—The Great Depression
10. Communist Ideology—From Marx to Lenin
11. The Rise of Fascism
12. Communist Revolution in Russia

### Part 2

13. The Totalitarian State? Nazi Germany
14. The Totalitarian State? The Soviet Union
15. China—The Legacy of Imperialism
16. The Chinese Revolution
17. India—The Legacy of Imperialism
18. India—The Road to Independence
19. Mexico—The Roots of Revolution
20. The Mexican Revolution and Its Consequences
21. Japan—The Path to Modernization
22. Japan—A New Imperial Power
23. The Pacific War
24. The European War

### Part 3

25. The Holocaust
26. Existentialism in Post-War Europe
27. Origins of the Cold War
28. The Cold War in American Society
29. Science and the State in Cold War America
30. The Welfare State
31. The Process of Decolonization
32. Challenges for Post-Colonial Societies
33. Competing Nationalisms—The Middle East
34. Development Models—Communist China
35. Development Models—Democratic India
36. The Authoritarian Development State—Japan

## Part 4

37. The Japanese Model—Available for Export?
38. Latin America—Dictatorship and Democracy
39. Hard Cases—Africa
40. An African Case Study—Nigeria
41. A Generation of Protests—Civil Rights
42. A Generation of Protests—1968
43. Global Women
44. The Rise of Fundamentalist Politics
45. Communism—From Reform to Collapse, 1956–90
46. The "End of History"?
47. Globalization and Its Challenges
48. A New World Order?