

EUS 200

Introduction to European Cultures and Identities

FALL 2026

Mon/Thur: 11:30-12:50

DSB C125

CRN: 11639 [1.5 Units]

Instructor: Dr. Nina Belmonte

Office: Clearihue B326

Email: belmonte@uvic.ca

Office Hours: Mon and Wed 2:00-3:00
or by appointment

I acknowledge with respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples (including the Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tsawout, Tseycum and Malahat nations) in whose territories and waters the university operates and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Course Description: What is “Europe”? What does it mean to be ‘European’? How does this heritage live on for us today in what we call “Western Culture”? This course explores the many facets of European cultures and identities through a multidisciplinary inquiry into crucial moments in the self-conception of European history. Our inquiry will take the form of a virtual tour of several key European cities (Athens, Rome, Granada, Florence, Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin). Each unit will begin with a brief sense of the city as it is today, then turn to its significance as representing a unique moment in an emerging European self-definition. In each case we will read some ‘voices’ - original texts from the time-period in question - and some secondary literature. Guest lectures from various European Studies faculty will aid us in developing a more in-depth and critical understanding of this vast and varied tradition.

Learning Objectives: This course will provide you with

- a multi-perspectival introduction to key texts, histories and ideas shared by anyone who lives and/or studies in a “western” country;
- an opportunity to hone your skills at critical reading, writing and verbal expression; and
- a new understanding of “Europe” and your own relation to its legacy.

Course Materials: All readings and videos will be made available on the Brightspace website.

Elements of Course Assessment

Class Participation and In-Class Exercises worth fifteen percent (15%)

Bi-weekly Study Questions worth twenty percent (20%)

In-class Midterm worth thirty percent (30%)

Final Exam worth thirty-five percent (35%)

Course Format and Expectations

This course is in-person only and will not be recorded. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings with care, and ready to discuss the material. Students who miss a class are responsible for any material covered therein, as well as for finding out what announcements, if any, were made.

Description of Assignments:**Class Participation (15%)**

You are expected to attend class, read or watch the assigned material, think, ask questions and participate in discussions. Every week, selected students will be responsible for providing a brief into to the city we'll be 'visiting'. In addition, there will be two In-Class Exercises when you will be asked to research a question, discuss with a peer group and present to the class.

Bi-Weekly Study Assignments (20%)

There will be five short homework assignments due every other week relating to the course readings and guest lectures. These assignments will compromise 20% of your grade, so you must take them seriously. Latecomers to the course must make up any missing Study Questions before the Midterm Examination.

In Class Midterm Exam (30%)

There will be an open-book Midterm Exam on February 5th during class time, covering material from the first part of the course. The exam will consist of identifications, short answer questions and a longer essay question. You may bring printed material: notes, crib sheets, even readings. No laptops, pads or phones will be permitted. Exams will be evaluated on your understanding of the course and lecture material, and the clarity and presentation of your answers.

Final Exam (35%)

There will be a cumulative, open-book Final Exam at the end of the term, compromised of several short answer and a longer, more in-depth essay question. As with the midterm, you may bring printed material: notes, crib sheets, even readings. No laptops, pads or phones will be permitted. Exams will be evaluated on your understanding of the course and lecture material, and the clarity and presentation of your answer.

***Minimum Requirements for Passing the Course**

To pass this course you must complete the Midterm and the Final along with at least 3 of the 5 Homework Assignments.

Grading:

All assignments will be graded with percentage grades using the standard UVic [scale](#).

Policy on Late Assignments

Limited, short-term extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis, as long as the request is made before the day the assignment is due. Appropriate accommodations will be made for those with an accommodation letter from the Center for Accessible Learning, but please note that these letters state specifically that such an accommodation is not "a blanket extension on all work, nor is it a license to submit work after the course has ended."

Additional Course Policies

Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct

Chat GPT and similar technologies are not permitted for this course. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. It is each student's responsibility to know the University's regulations in this regard. The Policy on Academic Integrity is published in [the University Calendar](#). You can also consult the [Libraries' plagiarism guide](#) or the [Tri-Faculty Standards for Professional Behavior for Students](#), which draws together a number of existing UVic policies in one place for ease of reference. Professionalism is expected from all students enrolled in courses in the Faculty of Humanities. As part of professionalism, students, faculty and staff are expected to be familiar with University policies, including the Tri-Faculty Standards.

Intellectual Property & Materials on the LMS Website

All assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of the instructor and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of the instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (link above). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

Academic Supports

The University has a number of academic support services that may help you in this course, including the [Centre for Academic Communication](#), the [Library's Research Support page](#), and the [Library's "Ask Us" service](#). Information about academic supports can also be found through the [University's Learn Anywhere site](#).

Academic Accommodations

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you believe you will require academic accommodations to address barriers to your education in this course and you have not already registered with the [Centre for Accessible Learning](#), please [do so](#). The Centre for Accessible Learning is the office designated to make arrangements for accommodations. You can find information about academic accommodations through the Centre for Accessible Learning's website.

Some Important Administrative Dates

- Sun. Jan 18th: last day for 100% reduction of fees.
- Wed. Jan 21st: last day to for adding first-term courses.
- Sun. Feb. 8th: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date.
- Sat. Feb 28th: last day for withdrawing from second-term courses without penalty of failure.

Other Resources**Student Resources**

- a. [UVic Learn Anywhere](#). UVic Learn Anywhere is the primary learning resource for students. It offers many learning workshops and resources to help students with academics and learning strategies.
- b. [Library resources](#). Information for students wishing to use the UVic library.
- c. Indigenous [student services](#)
- d. [Centre for Academic Communication](#)
- e. [Learning Strategist Program](#)
- f. [Academic Concession Regulations](#)
- g. [Academic Concessions and Accommodations](#)
- h. Academic accommodation & access for students with disabilities – [Policy AC1205](#)
- i. [Student wellness](#) resources.
- j. [Ombudsperson](#). A resource to help resolve disputes or complaints.
- k. Other [student groups and resources](#).

University Statements and Policies

- a. University Calendar – [“Information for all students”](#)
- b. [Creating a respectful, inclusive and productive learning environment](#)
- c. [Accommodation of Religious Observance](#)
- d. [Student Conduct and Non-Academic Student Misconduct](#)
- e. [Accessibility](#)
- f. [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)
- g. [Equity and Human Rights](#)
- h. [Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response](#)
- i. Discrimination and Harassment [Policy](#)

Schedule of Classes

WEEK ONE *Beginnings*

September 10 What/Where/Why is “Europe”?
Course Overview; Course Themes

WEEK TWO *The Possibility of a Polis: Athens*

14 Perspective
Read: Diamond, “Guns Germs and Steel” (excerpt)

17 Athens Now and Then: The Polis and its Logos
Read: Thucydides, “Pericles’ Funeral Oration”

WEEK THREE *Athens to Rome: Polis to Empire*

21* Ancient Athens **Guest Lecture: Dr. Cliff Roberts (PHIL)**
Read: Herodotus, “Histories” (excerpts)
Study Questions #1 Due

24 Rome Now and Then: Citizens, Soldiers, Builders
Read: Horace, “Cleopatra Ode”
Josephus, “An Imperial Triumph”

WEEK FOUR *Rome to Granada: Conquest to “Convivencia”*

28 Rome: Building Empire **Video: Mary Beard, “Rome”**
Read: Woolf, “Rome as World City”
Mary Beard: Episode 1, thru min 15
Episode 2, thru min 14 (to map on bridge)
Episode 3, at least thru min 11

October 1 Granada Now and Then: Living Together?
Read: Poetry from Alfonso X; Ibn Arabi, etc.
Lowney, *A Vanished World* (“A Common Life Shared”)

WEEK FIVE *Constantinople: The Other Empire*

5* Islamic Spain **Guest Lecture: TBA**
Read: Menocal, *Ornament of the World* (excerpt)
Douglas and Cavendish, *City of Illusions*, Chpt 5 (pp 73-83)
Study Questions #2 Due

8 Europe: A Christian (?) Community
Read: Augustine, “City of God” (excerpts)

WEEK SIX

12* **** THANKSGIVING ****

15 *****Midterm*****

WEEK SEVEN *Florence: Human Scale*

19 Florence Now and Then: Mortal Beauty, Acts, and Words
 Read: Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the
 Dignity of Man"

22 Humanism
 Read: Canniffe, "Early Renaissance: Perspective,
 Representation and the Ideal."

WEEK EIGHT *Amsterdam: Tolerance & Trade*

26* Amsterdam Now & Then
 Read: More, *Utopia*
 Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*
 Study Questions #3 Due

29 Tolerance and Trade
 Read: Shorto, *Amsterdam*, (excerpt)

WEEK NINE *Paris: Enlightenment in the City of Lights*

November 2 Paris Now & Then
 Read: BBC Documentary: "Slavery and Suffering"

5 Reason and Revolution **Guest Lecture: Dr. Jill Walshaw HIST**
 Read: Voices from the Enlightenment (Excerpts)

WEEK TEN

9 ****Reading Break****

12* In-Class Exercise: European Colonialism
 Study Questions #4 Due

Week Eleven – *Modern Europe and its Discontents*: London

- 16 London Now & Then
 Read: Darwin, *Origin of the Species* (excerpt)
 Marx, Communist Manifesto (excerpt)
- 19 The Special Case of Britain
 Watch: “The Great Exhibition” video

Week Twelve – *Modern Europe and its Discontents (cont)*: Berlin

- 23 Berlin: The Two Faces of Modernity
 Watch: Fritz Lang, “Metropolis” (clips)
 Riefenstahl, “Triumph of the Will”
- 26* German Film **Guest Lecture: Dr. Matt Pollard SLLC**
 Read: Clay Large, “Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936”
 Study Questions #5 Due

Week Thirteen – Final Thoughts

- 30 In Class Exercise: Europe – Where Do We Go from Here?

December 3 *Last Class and Final Review*