

An Introduction to the Contemporary World

Professors: José M. Portillo and Santiago de Pablo

This course is intended to be an introduction to the basic historical structures of contemporary western world. Since History students will have two specific courses on Contemporary History (Historia Contemporánea I y II) and also an optional course on World History since 1945 (Mundo Actual), this introductory course has been conceived as an outline of the main processes that shape the western hemisphere from late eighteenth century to the present. Consequently, although the course follows a chronological development, it focuses on structural processes and not on a comprehensive narrative.

The course is divided in two different parts. The first one, with duration of ten weeks, will be taught by Professor José M. Portillo and the second one, with duration of five weeks, will be taught by Professor Santiago de Pablo.

The first part of the course covers the period from late eighteenth century to 1939 and the second runs from World War II to the present. During the first part of the course we will have three weeks blocks devoted each of them to a subject (see the syllabus below). Each block is divided in lecture (1st week), activities (2nd week), and presentations (3rd week).

During the second part of the course we will use the methodological approach of History and Cinema. Each block will be divided in lecture, film screening, and commentary and debate in the classroom.

Students are expected to actively participate in activities in the classroom (10 % of the grade), prepare and deliver presentations (40%), and write a final essay (50%). The matter of the final essay should be personally discussed with the Professor during the first two weeks of the course. If you are considering withdrawal from examinations you should send a letter or an email to one of the two professors at least one month before the official date of the exam.

Syllabus

1. - General Introduction (week 1)
2. – From Enlightenment to Liberalism: Revolution and Political Change (weeks 2 to 4)
3. – Social Change and Capitalism (weeks 5 to 7)
4. – The Crisis of Liberalism and Capitalism (weeks 8 to 10)
5. – Towards a Bipolar World (weeks 11 to 13)
6. – After the Cold War: a New International Order (weeks 14 and 15)