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GESM 130 Seminar in Social Analysis
Section 35428, meets Tu-Th 9:30-10:50 VKC 255

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**Alternative Futures, Alternative Histories of World War II:
How Contingencies Change the World**

What if Franklin D. Roosevelt had been assassinated, was succeeded by a weak Vice President, who in turn failed to lead the nation to prepare for the Second World War? What if that resulted in the United States being defeated by Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany? Or, what if President Harry Truman decided not to use the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? While we are certain that these pasts did not happen, considering these alternative pasts is actually a highly productive way to study the way historical processes actually take place. A carefully-constructed account of *what did not happen*, based on the facts that existed at certain points in the past, is called a “counterfactual.” This course is inspired by a particularly expert “alternative history,” the 1963 novel by Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, which imagines the world in 1962 as it might have been had the Japanese and Nazis won the war and occupied North America. Dick’s meticulously researched novel presents a credible—not fanciful—alternative history and a superb reference point for asking, why did the Second World War take place the way it did? Every present is a moment between past and future, filled with many “contingencies.” Any number of developments might push the human world toward any one of numerous “possible worlds,” numerous possible “futures,” which then become a later generation’s “past.”

What factors determine, change, influence, or shape the course of history? The ability to answer that question, if even partially and incompletely, is an extremely valuable skill. If anyone wishes to bend the course of history today toward a future that they desire, then they will need to know the socio-economic-political factors are involved, and how historical processes operate. In this seminar, we will study how to make sense of historical processes, and the considerations necessary to inform social action in the present.

Learning Objectives: What are the major characteristics (or “variables”) of modern societies (eg, states, groups, institutions, cultures, militaries, media, etc) that undergo historical change, and what roles do they play in shaping historical processes? What are the major processes and relations that transform social structures in modern world history? How can the physical theories of “chaos,” and “possible worlds” be applied to the historical process, and how can the social-scientific concept of “contingencies” be deployed in historical study? What mechanisms for shaping a contingency’s outcomes are most efficacious? (eg, assassination, ideological persuasion, mass movements, etc).

Case Study: We shall study the Second World War, including the Pacific War, as a general case study--really a set of continental case studies that were linked everywhere across the globe, hence the title "World War." Assigned readings will include leading and classic scholarly histories of the Second World War, plus alternative histories written by historians and one major work of fiction in the genre of "alternative histories," Philip. K Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1963, which has also been adapted by Ridley Scott as an Amazon Television (Seasons 1 and 2, 2015-2016)

Written Assignments, Class Participation, and Grading

Class Participation (10%)

This is a SEMINAR format class, which require and depend on active participation by students in every session. Attendance is essential, but mere attendance is not good enough. Students must come prepared to TALK and interact with the instructor and with fellow students. That means that students must come PREPARED by having done the readings and any weekly written assignments (which are assigned and counted as part of this 10%).

Bi-Weekly Short Written Assignments (25%)

Students will write very short assignments for half of the weeks of the class. These assignments are intended to reinforce the readings and will be graded and returned by the next following session.

Mid-Term Bluebook (25%)

This bluebook is intended to consolidate students' understanding of the basic facts of World War II based on the readings in weeks 1-4, plus some readings on possible alternative factual outcomes. This blue book will NOT be based on massive rote memorization. I really mean basic facts, including the identities of top leaders of each nation, the most important beginning and ending dates, the significance of such major dates, and so on. I will not make you memorize minor events or anything nonessential to a general understanding of the basic outline of the Second World War. This blue book will take place in class, on the second meeting of that week. The first meeting of that week will be devoted to review.

Final Essay (40%: Includes two preliminary assignments, 10%+10%, and the final essay itself = 20% of course grade)

The final, culminating project for this course is for each student to write an alternative history of their own, based on the core concepts and skills developed in this class: a) control of "variables" and "processes" in history; b) exploitation of chaos and contingency. This paper will be 20 pages in length, but students will have five weeks-plus to draft and re-write it, during "workshops" that fill the last four weeks of the course, plus more than a week between the last class and the final essay due date (study days).

Grading

There is no "curve" in this course. Assignments later in the semester are weighed more heavily than assignments earlier in the semester, so that students can learn from their performance in the earlier assignments. For written work, detailed grading criteria will be circulated in class. The

basic grading standard for all written work, however, will be: a) Shows competent use of readings (citations, quotations, use of facts); b) Is structured effectively with a thesis/argument and supporting material); c) is well written. The in-class Blue Book will be graded simply, as it will be primarily a test of factual knowledge from the readings.

Assigned Readings (NOTE: Acquire these books. They are all ordered at the USC Bookstore, but you are free to check online for used copies or better prices):

Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (1963).

Niall Ferguson, ed, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* New edition (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Akira Iriye, *Pearl Harbor and the Coming of the Pacific War: A Brief History with Documents and Essays* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999).

R. A. C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History (Struggle for Survival)* Rev. Edn. (Oxford University Press, 2002).

Richard Polenberg, ed, *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000).

Selections From (available on reserve: do not acquire these books. Instructor will provide copies of assigned sections):

Robert Cowley, ed, *What Ifs? of American History* (Berkeley, 2004).

Dennis E. Showalter and Harold C. Deutsch, eds, *If the Allies Had Fallen: Sixty Alternate Scenarios of World War II* (2012).

Occasional In-Class Screenings:

We shall from time to time screen historic archival films and documentaries from the World War II era, plus selections from the Amazon Video adaptation of *The Man in the High Castle*.

Course Schedule Meetings, Readings, Screenings, and Assignments

Week #	Theme	Reading Assignment
1	What is counterfactual history? What is chaos? (And what is “social” order?) What are contingencies?	<p>Meeting Aug 23 Introductions</p> <p>Meeting Aug 25 Niall Ferguson, “Virtual History: Towards a ‘chaotic’ theory of the past,” from Ferguson, ed, <i>Virtual History</i>, pp. 1-90.</p>

2	Factual History: World War II	<p>Meeting: Aug 30 R. A. C. Parker, <i>The Second World War: A Short History</i> , Chapters 1-5</p> <p>Meeting Sept 1 R. A. C. Parker, <i>The Second World War: A Short History</i> , Chapters 6-10</p>
3	Factual History: World War II	<p>Meeting Sept 6 R. A. C. Parker, <i>The Second World War: A Short History</i> , Chapters 11-14</p> <p>Meeting Sept 8 R. A. C. Parker, <i>The Second World War: A Short History</i> , Chapters 15-18</p>
4	Factual History: The Pacific War in World War II (with counterfactuals)	<p>Meeting Sept 13 Akira Iriye, <i>Pearl Harbor and the Coming of the Pacific War</i>. Pp. TBA</p> <p>Meeting Sept 15 Counterfactuals: Lukacs, “No Pearl Harbor? FDR Delays the War,” in Cowley, ed, <i>What Ifs of American History</i>, pp. 179-180.</p> <p>Edward J. Drea, “What if the Japanese Navy had launched a second strike against Pearl Harbor in December 1941?” in Deutsch and Showalter, eds, <i>If the Allies Had Fallen</i>, pp 79-88.</p> <p>D. Clayton James and Anne Sharp Wells, “What if MacArthur had been left to surrender on Corregidor?” in Deutsch and Showalter, eds, <i>If the Allies Had Fallen</i>, pp 104-108</p> <p>Harold C. Deutsch and Dennis E. Showalter, “What if Hitler had not declared war upon the United States after Pearl Harbor?” in Deutsch and Showalter, eds, <i>If the Allies Had Fallen</i>, pp 97-104.</p>
5	Review and Mid-Term (25%)	<p>Meeting Sept 20 Review</p> <p>Meeting Sept 22 Mid-Term Blue Book In-Class. Obtain at least two blue books, large size. Instructor will exchange new ones from History Dept. supply.</p>
6	PKD’s Alternative Postwar Era	<p>Meeting Sept 27 Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (1963), first quarter</p> <p>Meeting Sept 29 Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (1963), second quarter</p>
7	PKD’s Alternative Postwar Era, and Ridley	<p>Meeting Oct 4 Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (1963), third quarter</p> <p>Meeting Oct 6</p>

	Scott's TV Adaptation	Screening and Critique, Amazon series, Man in the High Castle (Dir. Ridley Scott)
8	PKD's Alternative Postwar Era, and Ridley Scott's TV Adaptation	<p>Meeting Oct 11 Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (1963), fourth quarter.</p> <p>Meeting Oct 13 Screening and Critique, Amazon series, Man in the High Castle (Dir. Ridley Scott)</p>
9	Alternative Histories by Historians: A Different Europe?	<p>Meeting Oct 18 Nazi Triumph? Andrew Roberts and Niall Ferguson, "Hitler's England: What if Germany had Invaded Britain in May 1940?" From Ferguson ed, Virtual History, pp. 281-320.</p> <p>Meeting Oct 20 Michael Burliegh: What if Nazi Germany Had Defeated the Soviet Union?, in Ferguson, ed, Virtual History, pp. 321-347.</p>
10	Alternative Histories by Historians: A Different Pacific?	<p>Meeting Oct 25 A Different Ending to the Pacific War? Paul R. Schratz, The Conclusion of the Pacific War," in Deutsch and Showalter, eds, <i>If the Allies Had Fallen</i>, p 230-.</p> <p>Meeting Oct 18 Discussion of special critique TBA.</p>
11	Virtual Grand History?	<p>Meeting Nov 1 Niall Ferguson, "Afterward: Virtual History, 1646-1996," in Ferguson, ed, Virtual History, pp. 416-440.</p> <p>Meeting Nov 3: Discussion of special critique TBA.</p>
12	Identifying the Variables and Exposing the Processes.	<p>Meeting Nov 8: Discussion: Variables Meeting Nov 10: Discussion: Processes</p>
13	Narrative Structures, Contingencies, and Causal Chains	<p>Meeting Nov 15: Discussion: Narrative Structures Meeting Nov 17: Discussion: Contingencies, and Causal Chains</p> <p>Variables and Processes Breakdown Assignment Due (10%)</p>
14	Discussion of Draft Outlines	<p>Meeting Nov 22 Narrative Structures, Contingencies, and Causal Chains Assignment Due (10%) NO MEETING Nov 24 THANKSGIVING BREAK</p>
15	Final Projects Workshop	<p>Meeting Nov 16: Workshop: Exchange and critique of drafts. Meeting Nov 18: Workshop: Exchange and critique of drafts.</p>
Finals Week	Final Essay Due (20%)	<p>Final Essays are due at 5pm on the date assigned for the Final Exam in the USC Final Exam Schedule:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Thursday, December 8</p>

Student Conduct, Disabilities, and other Standard USC Policies: Forthcoming