

HIS 249
MODERN EUROPE, 1914-1945

MWF, 2:30-3:30

Satisfies: GLO

Thematic Categories: "Empires, Violence & Global Connections,"
"Health, Science & Environmental Change," "Law, Politics & Social Justice"

Professor Lawrence Frohman

The years between the outbreak of World War I and the end of World War II were a period of unprecedented ideological polarization, economic crisis, political revolution, ethnic violence, and expanding state power. The significance of the changes wrought during these years rivals that of the French and Industrial Revolutions in determining the shape of modern European society. The class will begin in the 1890s by examining the forces that were undermining both the bourgeois social order and the liberal political system. However, it was World War I that marked the definitive end of the 19th century. The Bolshevik Revolution, the collapse of the four old European empires, the expanding appeal of radical, conservative nationalism, the intensification of ethnic strife, and the willingness to use the greatly expanded power of the state to solve the problems of nation-making gave rise to a virtual civil war, which in every country pitted communism and radical right nationalism against both each other and the steadily shrinking bourgeois middle. However, the only way for states to solve these conflicts, transform their societies into more modern, powerful polities, and revise the Versailles settlement was to make war against both their own populations and the European order itself. This violence reached its zenith with Stalin's purges, the Nazi plan for the racial restructuring of European society, and the bitter civil wars that were fought in every European country as an integral part of the great wartime struggle against Nazi Germany.