

## HIST 302: EUROPE 1870-1950, 'SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN CRISIS AND CHANGE'

### ESSAY LIST 2012

1. 'It was only when what the schools said became relevant to recently created needs and demands that people listened to them.' (Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*. Examine the impact of literacy and education on peasant society in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe.
2. 'Probably the most rapid general improvement in the conditions of life of the nineteenth-century British worker took place in the "Great Depression" years, 1880-95.' Discuss.
3. Why were better educational opportunities so central to an improvement in the status of women in the period 1880-1930?
4. 'Although it appeared liberal, Imperial Germany cannot be reckoned a constitutional state in any but a formal sense. There was a conflict of appearance and reality; German political life was based on a sham constitutionalism.' Discuss with reference to the period 1871-90.
5. 'In the last decades of the nineteenth century French politicians and most of the electorate came to share a broadly based consensus in support of a pluralistic, liberal and property-owning society. This was the very real achievement of the much maligned Third Republic.' Discuss.
6. 'The New Imperialism was the last and most spectacular of Europe's assaults on the world and in such a perspective the "causes" of late nineteenth-century imperialism now seem more complicated than they did at the time.' Discuss.
7. 'By 1890, there was a great deal of pessimism to be found over the Habsburg monarchy's prospects for survival.' (Alan Sked). What were the particular difficulties facing the Austro-Hungarian Empire?
8. 'While not denying the potentially aggressive policies of France or Russia and other factors, it now seems clear that the decisions taken by the political and military leadership of Austria-Hungary and Germany were decisive in leading to the First World War.' Discuss.
9. 'The First World War, as a 'total conflict' impacted on civilian populations in new ways, both because civilians and civilian life became targets of strategy and because they were mobilised by means of propaganda campaigns which demonised their adversaries.' Discuss.
10. 'Post-war settlements presented the victorious powers with an appalling task, not made easier by the fact that hopes had been raised so high in a "war to end war". Discuss the problems facing the peacemakers in post-World War I Europe.

11. By what means did Mussolini gradually consolidate his dictatorship in Italy over the course of the 1920s?
12. Despite strains such as the general strike of 1926, the United Kingdom remained basically stable in the interwar years. How would you explain this?
13. 'For many millions of Germans, Hitler's economic miracle was in fact a highly ambiguous experience.' (Adam Tooze.) Assess the Nazis' economic policies in 1930s Germany.
14. How important was the control of information in Soviet Russia in achieving Stalin's economic and political aims in the 1930s?
15. Was the Spanish Civil War a sign of emerging political alignments or essentially a side-show in European developments in the 1930s? Give reasons for your conclusion.
16. Who was to blame for the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 – Hitler or the appeasers? Explain your conclusion.
17. Examine the experience of the Second World War on civilians in **one** of the following countries: France, Germany, Britain, Soviet Union.
18. Discuss the use of memoirs/journals as a source for the experience of the Holocaust, drawing on examples from two such documents.