Society and Culture in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy 1867-1918

Lecture Course

Course Syllabus

Course Description: This course offers a critical examination of the history of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, once one of Europe’s largest military powers which disappeared from the map after World War I. A restructured version of the Habsburg Empire, the Monarchy was a lasting, authoritarian framework of Central European ethnic groups which, however, gave rise to modernism in the field of arts and sciences. The juxtaposition of authority and modernity provides the focus of this survey which includes the study of the Monarchy as the birthplace of both Zionism and modern anti-Semitism. Nurturing a pioneering culture and a pre-modern society, Austria-Hungary is an exciting case of pioneering spirit and decadence, experimentation and dissolution, novelty and decay. The “disintegration of Austrian political culture” is particularly relevant today when presented as the “seedtime for fascism” (George V. Strong).

Prerequisite: Background in 19th and early 20th century European history.

Method of presentation: lectures, with organized discussions

Course requirements and grading: Class participation (10%), midterm exam (Monday, October 25, 2010, 30%), 12-15 page term paper (Wednesday, December 1, 2010, 30%); final exam (Monday, December 20, 2010, 30%). Attendance is mandatory.

Attendance: required

Contents:

Week I: Geography and Geopolitics of Central Europe
The nature of Central Europe – The “Lands Between”: East vs West – The Danube Valley, the Alps and Carpathians – Borders, frontiers – Powers, great and small
Reading: Johnson 3-12

Week II: The Habsburgs and Their Empire
The origins of the Habsburg family – Transformations of the Habsburg Empire – “Tu felix Austria” – The Habsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire – The Habsburgs and Hungary, the Habsburgs and the Czechs – The nature of Habsburg domination
Reading: Kann 3-47, Johnson 85-102

Week III: The German Question in 19th Century Europe
The struggle for mastery in Central Europe – The Parliament of Frankfurt – Prussia vs Austria: “Kleindeutsch” (Smaller German) or “Grossdeutsch” (Greater German)? The rise of the second Reich: Count Otto von Bismarck and King William I of Prussia – The impact of the Austro-Prussian War, 1866
Reading: Johnson 149-170

Week IV: From Empire to Monarchy: 1848 to 1867
Reading: Sked 8-136, Deák (Kossuth) 311-351

Week V: The Austro-Hungarian Compromise and the Dualist System
Reading: Sked 191-239, Deák (Army) 43-77

Week VI: Austria-Hungary and its Multicultural Empire
The national problem – German-Hungarian domination – National minorities – The languages of the Monarchy – Multiculturalism – Imperial unity vs nationalism – The Austrian idea
Reading: Kann 333-341, Pauley 1-31, Strong 68-85

Week VII: Review and Mid-Term Exam (Monday, October 25, 2010)

Week VIII: Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, Budapest and Prague
Week IX: The Birth of Modernism I:
(1) New approaches to the human mind: Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis, Ernst Mach and his critique of science, Ludwig Wittgenstein and the critique of language – The birth of modern personality and theory
Reading: Janik-Toulmin 120-166, 202-238, Schorske 181-207

(2) New approaches to the human body: Gustav Klimt, Oscar Kokoschka, Adolf Loos – Innovation in visual representation, form, and color – Function as ornamentation – Struggle against ornament – The cult of death

Week X: The Birth of Modernism II:
Reading: Janik-Toulmin 92-119, Schorske 208-278, [Waissenberger (ed.), 109-240]

Reading: [Waissenberger (ed.), 241-262], Lukacs 137-208

Week XI: Crime, Suicide, Emigration
The loss of the village, the growth and solitude of urban centers – The rich and the poor – The rise of violence – Reasons of high suicide rates – Mass emigration to the United States 1880-1914
Reading: Janik-Toulmin 33-66, Puskás 18-54

Week XII: Jews and the Rise of Antisemitism
Reading: Berkley 1-58, 101-131, Beller 1-70, McCagg 161-229, Patai 403-428

Week XIII: World War I and the Paris Peace Treaties
Reading: Sked 244-323, Pauley 32-99

Week XIV: Review and Final Exam (Monday, December 20, 2010)

Required Reading (excerpts):


