



*History 3277: European Thought and Culture: The Twentieth Century  
Spring 2018*

*Instructor: Prof. Kern*

*DESCRIPTION: A survey of the most dynamic period in all of Western cultural history, roughly 1890-1940, which saw a spectrum of revolutionary developments: modern art (Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky); modern literature (James Joyce, Marcel Proust); relativity and quantum theory (Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg); modern music (Arnold Schönberg, Igor Stravinsky); psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud); and existential philosophy (Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir). Smack in the middle was the hugely destructive First World War.*

*The first part centers on novellas by Joseph Conrad and Thomas Mann that foreshadow the decline of Western Civilization. The second part covers Friedrich Nietzsche and the “death of God”; my book on the impact of the telephone, wireless, cinema, automobile, airplane on time and space; and Virginia Woolf’s challenge to men and women in her classic feminist manifesto, *A Room of One’s Own*. The third part is divided between Freud’s efforts to diagnose and treat mental illness, Sartre’s analysis of what it means to be a human being, and De Beauvoir’s application of that philosophy to help explain why women in her time were “the second sex” and a proposal of how to equalize and enhance the humanity of both genders.*

*ASSIGNMENTS: Students write three papers (5 pages each) based on the readings and class discussions.*

*READINGS:*

*Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness**

*Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice**

*Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche and the Death of God*, edited by Peter Fritzsche*

*Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918**

*Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own**

*Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (selections)*

*Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (selections)*

*James Joyce, *Ulysses* (selections)*

*No prerequisites*