Europe 1815-1914: “Age of Bourgeoisie”

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Introduction

The series presents a history of Europe in the nineteenth century – “The Age of bourgeoisie”. It discusses Europe’s history, politics, society, and culture. Nation, industry, democracy, and progress stood in the nineteenth century for the concept of modernity. Peoples all over Europe formed nations, abandoned agriculture for industry and moved toward democracy. Increasing control over nature with machines and modern capitalism offered Europeans a growing sense of their power and prosperity. Europeans dominated, educated, classified and exploited others. World War I would call into question the foundations of European power and Europeans’ faith in progress and their cultural achievements.

Week 1: Europe Restored (1814-1840)

The intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment, the political turbulence of the French Revolution, and the economic transformation known as the Industrial Revolution initiated the rapid changes in the nineteenth century Europe. By 1815 Europe was reacting to the French Revolution and against the Enlightenment. At first the forces of “reaction” seemed to hold sway, but the revolutionary spirit of 1789 did not die. It inspired new outbreaks of revolution in the 1820s, in 1830, and in 1848.

The Enlightenment and the French Revolution

The Congress of Vienna

Restorations

The Revolutions of 1830

Week 2: The Industrial Age

Romanticism was a broad cultural movement, which rejected the Enlightenment’s emphasis on reason and classical forms derived from ancient Greece and Rome. Romanticism, however, contained its crucial political element as well. The industrial revolution began in England. The industrial world introduced machines, cities, factories, and clocks as real signs of new forms of life. Industry and nationalism
would reinforce one another in the second half of the nineteenth century, as the people of different nations competed for everything from international power and colonies to athletic trophies.

Romanticism

Nationalism

Once Upon Time in Britain

Week 3: Society and Its Ideas

Industrialization created new job opportunities and new sources of wealth that created new social groupings and changed the ways people thought about their positions in society. The three most dramatic changes were the growth of cities, the rise of the middle classes, and the appearance of the urban working classes. People began analyzing politics in a systematic way in response to the French and American revolutions. Europeans debated the meaning and implications of the revolutions, and in so doing they invented new sets of political ideas, liberalism, conservatism, socialism, and nationalism.

Classes

Conservatism

Liberalism

Socialism

Week 4: From 1848 to Nation-States (1840-1870)

In the year 1848, dozens of revolutionary uprisings broke out all over continental Europe, unleashing a storm of mass political protest. The revolutions failed to achieve almost all their aims; however, they transformed the great ideologies into the foundation of powerful political parties. Nation-state building after 1848 took a variety of forms. The first efforts to create nation-states failed, but both Italy and Germany became single, politically unified nations, and the balance of power in Europe changed significantly.

The Revolutions of 1848

The Crimean War
Unification of Italy and Germany

Austria-Hungary

**Week 5: The Age of Imperialism (1870-1914)**

In 1859 Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, telling of the rise, the development, and sometimes the disappearance of thousands of different forms of plant and animal organisms or species. When August Comte coined the term *positivism*, he was simply restating the Enlightenment’s optimistic faith in the miracle-working potential of science. Comte’s arguments were used to formulate debates on whether Europeans ought to intervene directly in their colonies to effect social change. Imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century changed the ways Europeans thought of themselves and their nations.

Darwin

Realism

India and East Asia

The Partition of Africa

**Week 6: Fin de Belle Époque (1870-1914)**

Many Europeans greeted the twentieth century as the age of modernity: with prosperity, individual freedoms, civilization and peace. Yet, the same science and industry that brought new wealth and comfort produced weapons that made it easier to annihilate each other. At the end of the nineteenth century and through the years that led to world war, the contradictions of the preceding hundred years came to surface.

*Belle Époque*

Modernism

Polarization

Road to Conflict
Further readings:


The Internet Modern History Sourcebook:
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html

The Victorian Web:
http://www.victorianweb.org/