Course Content

What is Europe? What do we mean by European Union? Or even by the boundaries of ‘Europe’ itself, especially given the historical West and East division? To what extent can certain states be even considered ‘European’, like Russia, Turkey, and even Britain? And what, if anything, do European states have in common, culturally, economically, historically?

This course looks at these questions and many others, through a study of the development of Europe as a Continental power (1792-1992). From the Marseillaise to Maastricht, and from Universal Human Rights to the idea of European union, European rulers and politicians have been engaged in a battle to dominate and even unite the continent under one banner. At times this battle has been predominantly ideological, as with the French and Russian Revolutionaries who sought to bring union through socialist liberation. At times it has been a literal battle fight, as in the battles of Napoleon’s and Bismarck’s Empires where both leaders used ideas of union to cement their own personal and political power. At times it has been both, as most devastatingly seen in WWI and particularly WWII. But whatever the motive, the overall aim has been the same – a Europe united in aspirations and identities, ready to bury individual differences in return for a world role. And it is this very aim which has given the concept so much appeal...and so many enemies.

Weekly Outline

1. What is Europe? - A Map History. Ideology and Terms
2. The Revolutionary Model – the ideas and impact of the French Revolution
3. The Imperial Model – Napoleonic Europe and the Continental System
4. The Industrial Model – Victorian Britain and the Birth of Modern Capitalism
5. The Nationalist Model – Bismarck and the making and impact of German Unification
6. The Marxist Model – Russian Revolution and the hopes and realities of Communism
7. The Racial Model – Hitler’s aims and aspirations and the impact of Nazism
8. The EU Model – the origins and growth of the European Union

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- describe the different political trends that have dominated Europe between 1792 and 1992
- discuss the nature, aims and aspirations of those trends
- critically use and evaluate a range of relevant historical evidence both primary and secondary