**HSTEU 276 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**\*\*\*Remember to bring your readings to class with you!!!\*\*\***

**WEEK 1 (January 11th discussion)**

**Tony Judt, “The Past is Another Country” (1992)**

**Winston Churchill, “Sinews of Peace” (1946)**

According to Judt, where, when, and what is the “postwar”? What is at stake in this definition – why does it matter? Who is included in or excluded from his understanding of postwar European history? Are there alternative visions of the postwar that we might propose?

What does the title of Churchill’s speech mean? Is it a contradiction in terms? What are his hopes and anxieties about the postwar world – what are the key threats to peace, and how does he think peace can be ensured? Is peace more dangerous than war?

What kind of future does Churchill envision? What role will different nations play in this imagined future? How does he characterize the Soviets, the Germans, the Americans? What do you make of the image of the Iron Curtain?

Ultimately, are Judt and Churchill optimistic or pessimistic about postwar Europe?

**WEEK 2 (January 18th discussion)**

**Primo Levi, *The Reawakening* (1963)**

How would you characterize Levi’s view of the postwar world? What is life like under the Soviets? What kinds of social relationships and politics do the survivors of the war experience?

What do you make of all the different characters who are introduced in the opening pages of *Reawakening*? What do they represent? Why do you think they are important to Levi? Which characters stand out to you?

How does Levi characterize the defeated Germans? What do you make of the conclusion of his memoir – has Levi been “liberated”?

**WEEK 3 (January 25th discussion)**

**Selected readings by William Beveridge**

**Alva Myrdal, *Nation and Family* (1941)**

Based on your reading of these texts, what IS a welfare state? What purpose is it supposed to serve? What did you think of the welfare state, as Beveridge and Myrdal describe it? Is it appealing? Scary? A little of both? Does it seem realistic (acknowledging that we have versions of it in contemporary United States)? Why or why not?

Why is the welfare state needed, accorded to Beveridge? What are his big fears about what might happen without welfare, given the particular challenges of the postwar era?

At the same time, what are the risks of welfare? What kind of person does Beveridge think the welfare state demands? What kind of state? Would you call Beveridge’s state big or little (? Is it socialist, and in what sense? What kind of economic change does he want?

Do these authors have a shared sense of what welfare should look like (i.e. is welfare different in Britain and Sweden)? How does Myrdal’s vision of welfare in Sweden compare to Beveridge’s vision for Britain? Is her state bigger than Beveridge’s?

Based on Myrdal’s chapter, “One Sex a Social Problem,” do you think the welfare state was good for women? What is the ultimate aim of her welfare state – what is it trying to accomplish?

Do Beveridge and Myrdal anticipate any problems with welfare, and how do they think these problems should be addressed?

**WEEK 4 (February 1st discussion)**

**Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (1959)**

**Jane Kramer, “Les Pieds Noirs” (1972)**

According to Fanon, what *specifically* is wrong with colonialism? Does he offer a solution? How does Fanon think the Algerians have been changed by French occupation – have they become French? What role does European technology (such as the radio) play in the Algerian independence movement?

What is the significance of the veil for Fanon? How do the French and the Algerians interpret the veil differently? How does Fanon characterize the role of women in the Algerian War? The role of marriage and the family? What does Fanon want for Algeria, ultimately?

Are you sympathetic towards the *pieds noirs* in Jane Kramer’s essay? Who are the *pieds noirs*, exactly, and how do they see themselves? How do the French see them?

How would you describe Mme. Martin? Is she French? What about her family? Do her husband and children seem more French than she does? How do they feel about Algerian Arabs?

**WEEK 5 (February 8th discussion)**

***Beneath the Paving Stones* (2001)**

Based on the readings you did for today, what would you say the revolutionaries want? What are they trying to achieve – what kinds of changes do they want to effect? What methods do they use to promote these changes?

Is the revolution of ‘68 a political revolution, in the traditional sense? What kind of revolution is this, if it’s a revolution at all?

Who or what is a student, according to these texts? Why are students so crucial to this revolution? What is it like to be a student in ’68, and how do the leaders of this revolution think that students should change?

Did this perception ring true to you, and are you sympathetic to this perspective – what did you think of the tone and style of the readings and images? Who is the intended audience?

**WEEK 6 (February 15th discussion)**

**Bobby Sands, *Writings from Prison* (1998)**

What are some of the key themes that recur in Sands’ writing? How does he describe the world of Long Kesh? What image do we get of his opponents?

How does Sands justify his own actions? What is he trying to achieve, exactly? Why does he move to the technique of the hunger strike?

What do you make of the fact that much of the later work is written in Irish? What elements of Irish history are important to him? What other (non-Irish) histories are significant for him?

**WEEK 7 (February 22nd discussion)**

**Slavenka Drakulic, *Cafe Europa: Life After Communism* (1996)**

What changes (and fails to change) with the revolutions of 1989? How do these events compare to what we saw in ’68? Why are these events or phenomena so important to her: the “murder” of the trees, good teeth, nicer bathrooms?

How does Drakulic feel about communist society? Did it have any positive features, according to her? Why did royalists appear after 1989? What do you make of the scene at Ceausescu’s grave?

Does Drakulic ultimately think these revolutions were good for politics, for social ties, for individual psyches? Is she optimistic or pessimistic about the effects of 1989?

What is Europa, and how is it different from Europe? What does it mean to be European after 1989? Is Germany more European than Croatia, and if so, then why? Who gets to be European?

**WEEK 8 (February 29th discussion)**

**Hanif Kureishi, “London and Karachi” (1989)**

**Ian Buruma, “Letter from Amsterdam” (2005)**

How does Kureishi characterize the two key spaces of his essay – London and Karachi – and what is the relationship between them? What kinds of experiences does he have (and what kinds of people does he encounter) in these different settings?

What is surprising to Kureishi about Pakistan? How do Pakistanis that he meets think about England? How do you explain Kureishi’s choice to stay in England?

How does Buruma interpret the murder of Theo Van Gogh? How would you characterize the Overtoomse Veld? Is he sympathetic to Mohammed Bouyeri? To Hirsi Ali? To Larouz? What are the different ways of being a migrant in postwar Europe?

NO DISCUSSION ON NOVEMBER 25th – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!

**WEEK 10 (March 8th discussion)**

**Thomas Friedman, “Was Kosovo World War III?” (1999)**

**Margaret Thatcher, “New Threats for Old” (1996)**

**Brexit readings (links TBA)**

What is the relationship between the conflict in Yugoslavia and earlier conflicts (namely, the Second World War and the Cold War)? How have things changed between Churchill and Thatcher? What does Thatcher see as the relationship between new threats and old?

Have the Second World War and Cold War truly ended – and if so, what has replaced them? Or have they simply been recast in new forms in Yugoslavia and elsewhere? What’s wrong with multilateralism and the EU? What does Thatcher see as the solution?

For Friedman, how are these new European conflicts related to the history of war in Europe? Are they repetitions of past wars, or innovations?

**WEEK 11 (March 15th discussion)**

**Mircea Cărtărescu, “Europe Has the Shape of My Brain” (2004)**

What do you make of the title of this essay? What is this thing called “Europe,” and how has it been changed by the postwar decades?

What kind of Europe does Cărtărescu want? How does he think it can be attained? Do you agree with his vision for Europe? What would our other authors and filmmakers think of this vision?