

# Modernity

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## I. Early Modernity:

### A. 1500-1700: transition from the medieval world

#### 1. Political:

- a. destruction of feudal relations
- b. growth of absolutism
- c. Treaty of Westphalia (1648)
  - (1) interstate balance of power:
  - (2) national sovereignty
- d. freeing up of commercial / bourgeois elements ("possessive individualism")
  - (1) English Civil War, Restoration, "The Glorious Revolution"
    - (a) Locke and slavery: not for English, but for Africans
    - (b) Pope and new consumables: coffee, chocolate, sugar
  - (2) Holland and freedom of religion, thought, and commerce
    - (a) Spinoza and democratic theory
    - (b) West India Company and colonialism: Dutch war for Brazil

#### 2. Economic:

- a. discovery of New World:
- b. beginnings of colonial slavery system and "Atlantic triangle"

#### 3. Military:

- a. gunpowder, mercenaries, increasing discipline
- b. Wars of Religion on the Continent
- c. Piracy and struggles for control of the oceans

#### 4. Cultural:

- a. Luther's theses (1517): and the Reformation
- b. Council of Trent (1548-63): Counter-Reformation
- c. overlapping and competing movements
  - (1) Baroque (1630-1750) [considered Rococo decadence at the end]
  - (2) Classicism (1660-1716) [reign of Louis XIV]

### B. 1700-1800: Acceleration

#### 1. Political:

- a. early: high point of absolutism
- b. late: American and French revolutions
- c. development of "governmentality" and statistics

#### 2. Economic:

- a. Imperial "free trade" and "Mercantilism"
- b. colonial slave production primes the pump of English "Industrial Revolution": {"Williams thesis"; Robin Blackburn}
- c. expansion into Asian and competition for world markets

#### 3. Military: British defeat the French in North America and take India

#### 4. Cultural:

- a. the "Enlightenment" (Kant: "Age of Critique")
  - (1) objective science [free from religious superstition]
  - (2) universal morality [free from religious dictates / dogma]
  - (3) autonomous art [free from religious censors]
- b. the Encyclopedia: compilation of human arts: "look what we can do co-operatively to improve human life if only we were free to do so"

### C. 1800-1900: Consolidation

#### 1. Political:

- a. French struggles: Empire and Republic
- b. American expansion and Civil War
- c. Haitian Republic (1804): defeats Napoleon's attempt to re-establish slavery

#### 2. Economic: increasing importance of industrial manufacture; end of slavery

#### 3. Military:

- a. citizen armies (Napoleon's innovation);
- b. French establish African colonies (1830 onwards)
- c. "scramble for Africa" among all European powers 1880s

#### 4. Cultural:

- a. novel, opera, and other bourgeois-consumable cultural commodities
- b. Baudelaire: "painter of modern life": urban life, dandyism, flaneurs
- c. Nietzsche: criticism of modernity as socialist, feminine, mass mediocrity

## II. High point: 1915-60:

### A. Political:

#### 1. Communism:

- a. Russian Revolution (1917) [Allied Expeditionary Force, White Russians]
- b. Stalinism (1927 {assassination of Trotsky} - 1953)
- c. Cold War and construction of Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe

#### 2. Far Right powers

- a. Italian fascism (1922-45)
- b. German National Socialism (1933-45)
- c. Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and Franco (1939-75)

#### 3. Post-war US hegemony and the "Free World": UN, NATO, SEATO

### B. Economic:

#### 1. mass production and consumption: ("Fordism"): the "black Model T"

#### 2. labor unions and Taylorism:

- a. wages vs. control of work-floor discipline
- b. Marx / Foucault: discipline and the pre-conditions of socialism
- c. "aristocracy of labor" and racism / sexism

#### 3. government regulation and mass programs ("Keynesianism")

- a. "New Deal" {SEC, FCC, Social Security, etc.}
- b. post WW II: US global hegemony
  - (1) Marshall Plan
  - (2) Bretton Woods

### C. Military: the two World Wars: mass industrial wars

### D. Cultural:

#### 1. Futurists: worship of speed, change

2. Modernists: reaction to mass production and consumption: perspectivism and relativism: change in experience of space and time Matisse, Picasso, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Proust, Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot, Pound, Saussure, Einstein, Mies van der Rohe, Corbusier

#### 3. Dada, Surrealism, Situationism: critiques from the "left"

#### 4. Spengler, Heidegger: anti-modernist cultural critique from the right

## III. Revolutions: 60s / early 70s:

A. Linkage of political-military-economic-cultural ("New Left" theorizes "the system," with US in Vietnam as catalyst)

### B. Notable events

- 1. End of colonialism in Africa and Asia
- 2. Civil rights (1963 March on Washington) and Black Power (SNCC)
- 3. Women's liberation
- 4. 1968 as (failed) global revolution
- 5. Gay liberation (Stonewall: August 20, 1969)
- 6. "Hippies" and counter-culture: "sex, drugs, rock n' roll": but what kinds?

## IV. End: 1970-91 [details to follow in our course]

### A. Political-economic-military:

- 1. Beginning of the end: 1971: end of international gold standard
- 2. Middle of the end: Thatcherism / Reaganism
  - a. "neo-liberalism": attack on New Deal
  - b. arms race and "spending them [Soviets] into bankruptcy"
- 3. End of the end: 1989-91: dismantling of Soviet Empire

### B. Cultural

- 1. Decadence: 70s: e.g., "stadium rock"; booze and downers vs. 60s hallucinogens
- 2. Backlash: 80s/90s against blacks, women, gays, "the 60s," "political correctness"
- 3. Resistance / appropriation: punk, funk, rap