

# **CATASTROPHIC EUROPE 1900-1950, AS LIVED AND SOMETIMES AS IMAGINED.**

**Coordinator:** Karis Hall

What was it like to have lived in Europe during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? This study group examines the lived experience of those alive in Europe from 1900-1950 with emphases on the catastrophic role of Germany. Participants study memoirs and autobiographies, sometimes view a film or read a fictional account. The time divides into periods of stability (1900-1914), World War I and its aftermath (1919-1939) and World War II and its aftermath (1939-1950). A brief summary of historical events by the coordinator begins examination of each period with subsequent detailed study of how it was to live then.

**Readings and other Required Materials:** Coursepack, estimated \$20-\$25. Films are available on Netflix and on YouTube.

**Karis Hall** lived and studied in France and Germany for three years in the early 50s, a time much influenced by the events here to be studied. She has coordinated classes on the French and Russian Revolutions, Hitler, Mussolini and on Berlin.

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Assignments are 30-40 pages of reading per week. Films are generally optional and are available on Netflix and YouTube.

First assignment: read the selections by Stefan Zweig in the course pack.

### **I. Europe 1900-1914 Stability**

Week 1 Stefan Zweig, The World of Yesterday, selections:  
Chapter I, "The World of Security," pages 1-27

Week 2 Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth, selections:  
"Preface" by Shirley Williams (Brittain's daughter);  
"Forward," Chapter 1, "Forward from Newcastle,"  
pages 18-25; 32-43  
Chapter II, "Provincial Young Ladyhood," pages 50-69  
Report: Emilie Carles, A Life of Her Own, selections

## **II. World War I 1914-1919**

Week 3: Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front (fiction or film)  
report: La Grande Illusion (film)

## **III. 1919-1923 Inflation**

Week 4: Christopher Isherwood, The Berlin Stories (fiction) either “Goodbye to Berlin,” or “Sally Bowles”  
Report: Cabaret (film)

## **IV. 1923-1939 Hitler’s Rise to Power**

Week 5: William L. Shirer, Berlin Diary, selections

Week 6: Sebastian Haffner, Defying Hitler, selections

Week 7: Victor Klemperer, I Shall Bear Witness, selections

Week 8: Joachim Fest, Not I, Memoirs of a German Childhood, selections

Week 9: Triumph of the Will (film)  
Report: Edmund de Waal, The Hare with Amber Eyes, (fiction)

## **V. 1939-1950 World War II and the aftermath**

Week 10: Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men, selections

Week 11: Christabel Bielenberg, The Past is Myself, selections  
Marie Vassiltchikov, Berlin Diaries 1940-1945, selections

Week 12: Anonymous, A Woman in Berlin, selections  
Report: Bernhard Schlink The Reader (fiction)  
Coordinator’s conclusion: How Europe has dealt with its Nazi past.