**History Writing As A Narrative Art**

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The course starts from the methodological claim that the history writing that has lasted and has had the most important impact in shaping history itself has been history written as a form of narrative art.  This claim is not meant to deny the immense contribution that social science methodologies have made to historical scholarship, but to argue that it is the integration of these methods into narrative art that gives history writing its impact on the historical understandings and mythologies of nations and societies.  Narrative art is intrinsic to the making of national mythologies, and the class will evaluate what responsibilities the historian as artist bears for the uses made of his works.

The course will take students through a range of masterpieces of narrative art, beginning with Edward Gibbon’s chapters on the Christian religion in The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. It will then look at three classics of 19th century history writing: Macaulay’s chapters on the *Glorious Revolution of 1688*, Tocqueville’s *Ancien Regime and the French Revolution*, Burkhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance*, seeking to understand the literary conventions, standards of evidence and political agendas that shaped these works.

In the 20th century, three works of historical popularization will occupy center stage:  Huizinga’s *Waning of the Middle Ages*, Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation*, and Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*. Like the 19th century classics, these 20th century narratives exerted a powerful political impact on their times, Polanyi in crystallizing social democratic discontent with capitalism and Spengler capturing a disillusion with Western modernity that strongly influenced the fascist movements of the 20th century.

After 1945, three works again will occupy our attention:  Fernand Braudel’s *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip the Second*, written while in a prisoner-of-war camp; Eric Hobsbawm’s *Age of Extremes: A Short History of the 20th Century*; and Margaret MacMillan’s *1919*.  Each of these works can be seen as an attempt to give shape to the 20th century, as seen through three different traditions: Braudel and the French Resistance; Hobsbawm and the Marxist tradition; and Margaret MacMillan as a classic liberal.

Remaining classes will look at classics of narrative art from the early 21st century that re-examined the heritage of slavery and empire.