Europe’s past still matters: our lives today bear deep traces of the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, Imperialism, Fascism and Communism, World Wars I & II, the Cold War, decolonization, the collapse of communism and the emergence of ethnic cleansing. This course provides a basic overview of these major events. Prominent themes are the changing experience of violence, the relationship of Europe to the rest of the world, and the tensions within and among national, ethnic and “Western” identities. This course fulfills some of the traditional goals of a Great Books Course by introducing major thinkers like Luther, Hobbes, John Stuart Mill, and Karl Marx. But we will also use other kinds of historical sources, such as personal memoirs, parliamentary debates, and film. There will be ample opportunities for reflecting on connections between the past and the present, and asking, "How does this history matter today?"

Who are these people and why should you care? Would you be who you are if they hadn't been who they were? Come find out!