

Contemporary History

- Contemporary European History
- Media History
- International Legal History

Before the Fall, after the Flood: Observing Europe's Reunification

In 2019-21, the demise of the dictatorships in central and Eastern Europe will be celebrated by many and bemoaned by some, but probably be commemorated by all. From 1989 to 1991, the integration of the socialist bloc transformed the European subcontinent manifestly: old regimes were brought down from Berlin to Moscow and from Tallinn to Tirana; a host of independent states (re)appeared on the map; peaceful transitions in some places contrasted with civil unrest and wars in others. Entire societies embarked on a long and difficult path of transformation, though not always the one individuals had envisioned, which continues to this day and has turned out much less straightforward, more difficult, and – economically, culturally, and politically – more costly than expected. One of the most interesting questions is how much of that was anticipated, which hopes and expectations were linked to Europe's early stages of reunification – and not only in the countries directly involved but also elsewhere. This opens many possibilities for MA theses to explore how outside observers – foreign government, embassies, scholars, et al. – perceived of the change. Did, for instance, Norwegian diplomats in both Germanys see the revolution coming, and what did they think of it once it was under way? How were the German states (or Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, etc.) presenting themselves in 1988 (e.g. during the European Championship) and how would they by 1992? How did Swedish assessments differ from those by French, British, and other observers?

Media Histories & the End of the World of Print

Printing has been the most important technology over the past 500 years. For centuries the production, transmission, and reception of knowledge and information have depended on printed media: books, newspapers, catalogues, newsletters, etc. The producers of print enjoyed the benefits of enhanced social status and power, from authors to print workers and newspaper tycoons. With the advent of electronics and digital technologies, however, the situation has changed dramatically. Other media, notably TV and online media, have cut away the monopoly of print, and the oft-cited information age is characterised by virtual rather than printed communication. What does this imply for the protagonists of the printing and publishing industry, writers, journalists, publishers, printers, distributors – but also readers? How are they affected by, how do they cope with, and how do they bring about change? Within this broad field, I would like to assist students in developing their own research project. These may explore the rise of global media companies, the fate of journalists' and printing trade unions in the twentieth century, or the debates about literacy and reading in the successive ages of radio, TV, and the internet, as well as other, related subjects.

History of and in International Law

International adjudication is pervasive: planet-wide, two dozen courts deal with matters ranging from human rights to the rules of war and from border delineation to tariffs and trade agreements. They exercise constitutional as well as administrative review; they legitimize the enforcement of international law; they

determine the scope of individual freedom; and they supplement power politics in inter-state relations, deciding what states can legally do to each other in war, trade, and diplomacy. To historians, these courts – including those that have ended their existence like the post-World War II tribunals or the courts set up by the United Nations to deal with the Yugoslavian civil war and the Rwandan genocide – are of major interest both for what they do and how they are doing it: international courts regularly draw on historiography and contribute to it. There is a wide range of subjects in this field which lend themselves to exploring in an MA thesis framework. These include studies of individual protagonists in international trials, analyses of how particular conflicts are re-told in court, investigations into judicial networks, studies of media perception of trials and tribunals, etc. In terms of historical periodization, a wide range of bodies from the League of Nation's Permanent Court of International Justice to today's courts and tribunals from The Hague to Phnom Penh are open to investigation.