**CENS 202-203 (3)  
Great Works of Literature from Central, Eastern and Northern Europe (in English): European Identities**Prerequisite: none  
Term: 2 (2025/26)  
**Time: T 11:00-12:30pm PST**The course is taught in **online** format, with the class meeting **on Zoom** every Wednesday.

Instructor: Dr. [Markus Hallensleben  
Email: mhallen@mail.ubc.ca](mailto:Markus%20HallenslebenEmail:%20mhallen@mail.ubc.ca%20)Office Hours: W 12:30-1pm PST by appointment only on Zoom

Teaching Assistant: t.b.a.  
Office Hours: t.b.a.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course discusses European identities from a decentred point of view. Its goal is to question where Europe begins, ends, and where its centre could be located, culturally and geographically. We critically review hierarchies of power in a short story by Franz Kafka, the colonial context of European history by reading a fairy tale by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, discuss how Germany dealt with the Holocaust after 1945 (Bernhard Schlink: *The Reader*), and look at Europe from the East by focusing on post-communist Europe and the ‘Balkan’ region (Slavenka Drakulić: *Café Europa Revisited*). We will also study journalistic writings and documentaries that deal with the EU extension in 2004.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course (i.e., with active attendance and participation, completion of reading and writing assignments), students will be individually and cooperatively able to:

1. analyse elements of the European cultural and historical contexts that are reflected in the literature of the period and area;
2. discern the memory agendas at play in the building of collective memories of colonialism, Holocaust and Eastern Block;
3. be able to recognize the impact of Eurocentricity on the concept of cultural identity, as well as the ways in which it informs the politics and policies of the EU extension;
4. be able to present on key terms around the topics of cultural identity and alienation, European nationalism and migration (e.g., give definitions of double bind, collective guilt, European cultural identity, hybridity);
5. develop and manage in-class group work that addresses course themes/objectives in regards to values that differ from one’s own.

**Acknowledgement**

UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

**EVALUATION/GRADING SYSTEM**

## Class Participation (30%): includes active participation in home study assignments through self-assessment (20%), as well as attendance of the Zoom lectures on Wednesdays (10%)

### Marked Assignment (10%) and Group Presentation: Written reflection to be submitted on CANVAS on 16 March 2026 (10%) for Group Presentation on 18 March 2026

### Midterm Exam (30%) on CANVAS with Lockdown Browser: 23 February 2025, 11am-12:30pm PST (80min)

**Either Final Essay (30%): due on 8 April 2026 at midnight, to be submitted on CANVAS.  
Or Final Exam (30%) on CANVAS with Lockdown Browser: t.b.a., 11am-12:30pm PST (80min)**

**SYLLABUS**

| **Date** | **Topic/Primary Readings** |
| --- | --- |
| Jan 5 | *UBC Imagine Day, no Zoom class*  **Home Study: Make Yourself Familiar with the Course on Canvas** |
| **Jan 7** | **1. Overview and Introduction: European Identities – Dealing with Politics and Narratives of Power and Place** |
| Jan 12-**14** | **2.Franz Kafka: “**[**Before the Law**](http://www.kafka.org/index.php?id=162,165,0,0,1,0)**“;** Ushev: *The Man Who Waited* (2006, Short Film); Orson Welles: *The Trail* (1962, [excerpt](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqPeI7-eVgc&feature=related)) |
| Jan 19-Feb 9 | **3. *Dealing with the Past –* Bernhard Schlink (Germany): *The Reader;*** [*Verdict on Auschwitz*](https://ecommerce.umass.edu/defa/film/3591) (Documentary); |
| **Feb 11** | **4. Townhall: Midterm Review** |
| Feb 13 | Final Essay Draft Due (Optional) |
| *Feb 16-20* | *Reading Week* |
| Feb 23 | **Midterm Exam (30%) Online on Canvas** |
| **Feb 25** | **5. *Before and after the EU-Extension in 2004 – Where Europe Ends* (Documentary, Romania); Richard Swartz (Sweden): “Where Europe Ends”** |
| Mar 2-**4** | **6. *European Identity I –* Stanislaw Mucha (Germany/Poland): *The Center of Europe* (Documentary, Germany; excerpts)** |
| Mar 9-**11** | **7. Slavenka Drakulić (Croatia): *Café Europa Revisited: Life after Communism*** |
| **Mar 16-**  **25** | **8. *European Identity II* - Marked Assignment (10%) for Group Presentations on Ursula Keller (ed.): *Writing Europe*** |
| Mar 30- **Apr 1** | **9. *Postcolonial Europe - A Fairy Tale?*****Hans Christian Andersen (Denmark): “The Emperor’s New Clothes”** |
| **Apr 8** | **10. Townhall: Final Exam Review  Final Essay due at midnight PST** **(30%)** ***or*** |
| **t.b.a.** | **Final Exam (30%) Online on Canvas** |