

The History of Flying in and out of Europe

Seminar (9 sessions) · English · Undergraduate

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This nine-session course explores the transformative history of aviation in Europe, tracing its profound impact on society, politics, and the environment from the early 20th century to the present. Students embark on a thematic journey examining how aviation has compressed physical and temporal distances, shaped public and political ideologies, and influenced major geopolitical events.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will:

- Understand key historical developments in European aviation and their socio-political contexts.
 - Analyse the broader implications of aviation on global mobility, regional development, and environmental sustainability.
 - Engage critically with the material and historical impacts of aviation through discussions, presentations, and a final research project.
 - Understand the relevance of personal stories for historical understanding.
 - Be able to present their insights in a digital, video-based format and translate research findings for social media.
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METHODOLOGICAL FOCUS

The course combines classical seminar discussion with oral-history and digital-storytelling methods. Students conduct a short interview (real or, with critical reflection, AI-imagined with a historical figure), research the historical context, and translate their findings into a digital format suitable for a public audience.

PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENT: “PERSONAL NARRATIVES IN AVIATION HISTORY”

1. **Flight story interview** — Conduct a 10-minute interview with a partner of your choice (family member, acquaintance, or member of the public) about a significant flight experience. As an alternative, an AI-generated interview with a historical figure may be used, with explicit methodological reflection.
 2. **Historical context research** — Research the historical context of the flight story: the relevance of the route or connection and the type of aircraft used.
 3. **Contemporary comparison** — Analyse whether the trip would be possible today; compare the cost of the ticket in relation to the person’s status and background; explore how the experience might differ in a contemporary context.
 4. **Creative presentation** — Combine all elements into a cohesive digital artefact (e.g., short-form video or image-based slideshow) that tells a story about the flight experience, its historical context, and its relevance to today’s world of aviation.
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ASSESSMENT

Portfolio assignment as described above; regular participation in seminar discussions.

Course materials and a tentative class schedule are provided at the start of the seminar and tailored to the participating cohort.

SELECTED READINGS

| Topic | Sources |
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| Compression of Space and Time through Aviation | Bhimull, Chandra (2017). <i>Empire in the Air: Airline Travel and the African Diaspora</i> . Chapter "Speed", pp. 45-64. |
| Aviation during Fascism and War | Fritzsche, Peter (1992). <i>A Nation of Fliers</i> . Introduction and Chapter 5, pp. 185-219. |
| Crossing the Iron Curtain | Scheuermann, Christoph: "Hijacked to Capitalism." <i>Der Spiegel</i> . Svik, Peter: <i>Civil Aviation and the Globalization of the Cold War</i> , pp. 1-13. |
| Air Travel, Tourism, and Environmental Impact | "Aviation Future: Next Hundred Years." <i>Development Review</i> , Vol. 44, Issue 3. Sam Woolfe (2022): "Flying and Sustainable Tourism." |