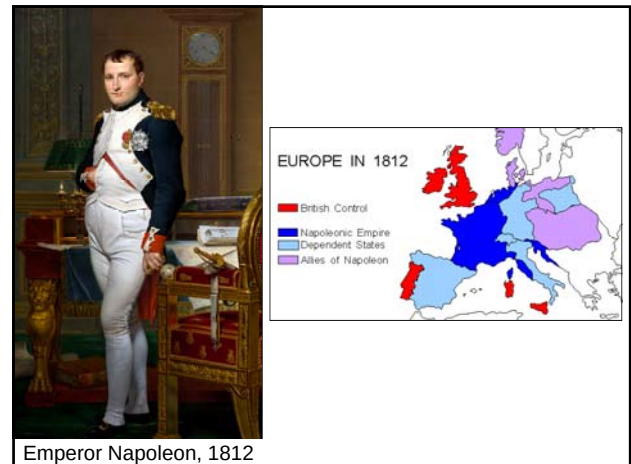


Existentialism

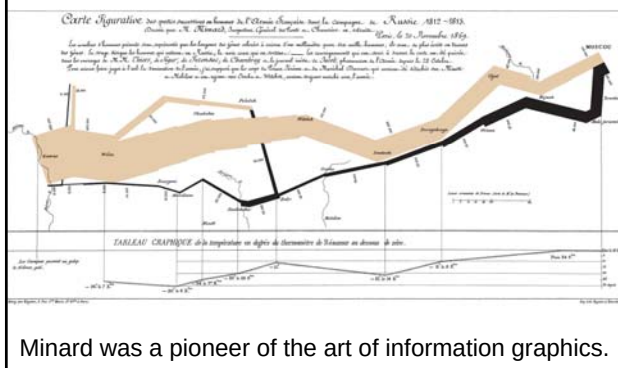
Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts.

Existentialist Crisis

- In existentialism, the individual's starting point is characterized by what has been called "the existential attitude," or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world.
- A person experiencing this disorientation and confusion is facing an "existentialist crisis."

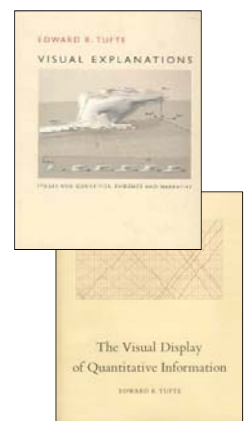


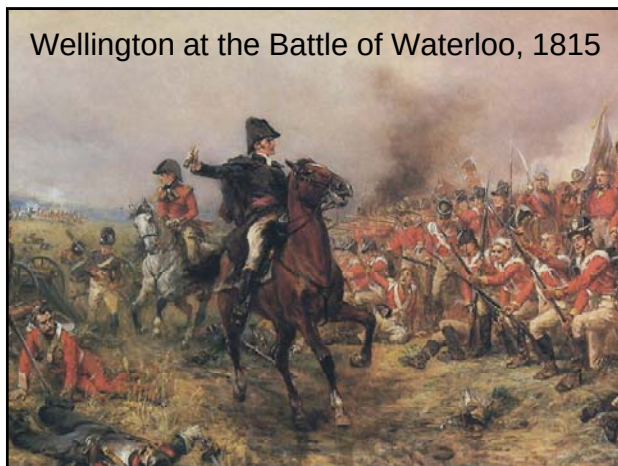
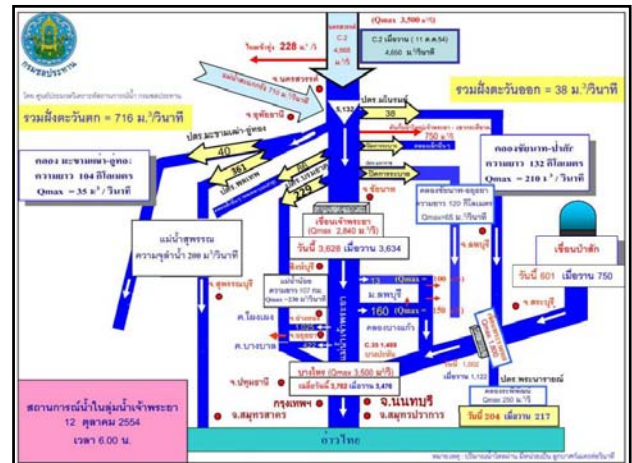
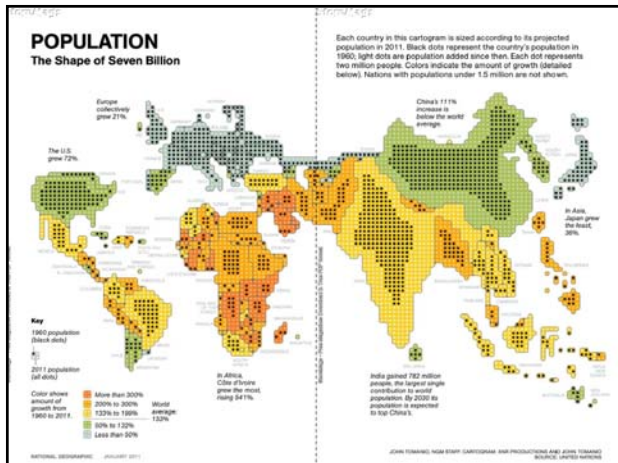
Charles Minard's flow map of Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia



Edward Tufte

- Edward Tufte is an American statistician and professor emeritus at Yale University. He is noted for his writings on information design.
- **Information design** is the skill and practice of preparing information so people can use it with efficiency and effectiveness.
- He coined the term "chartjunk" to refer to useless, non-informative, or information-obscuring elements of quantitative information displays.





Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855)

- Founder of Existentialism
- He made philosophy personal by posing these questions:
 - Who am I?
 - What am I doing here?
 - Where am I going?
- He rejected the traditional pieties and systematic answers of both philosophy and the orthodox Christianity of his time.
- Instead, he embraced a vision of faith in which belief is considered to be a real choice and one that absolutely can't be validated or justified by reason.

A black and white portrait of Søren Kierkegaard, showing him from the chest up. He has dark, wavy hair and is looking slightly to the right of the viewer. He is wearing a dark coat over a white shirt with a high collar.

"Religion is the opiate of the masses."

- Karl Marx, 1843

Nietzsche (1844-1900)

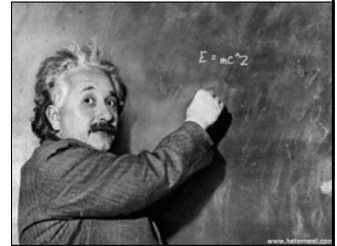
In Nietzsche's view, developments in modern science and the increasing secularization of European society had effectively 'killed' the Christian God, who had served as the basis for meaning and value in the West for more than a thousand years.



"God is dead."

Scientific Truth?

In 1905, Einstein introduced his theory of special relativity and deduced from it the shocking notion that mass and energy were not distinctly separate concepts.



The Emergence of Germany

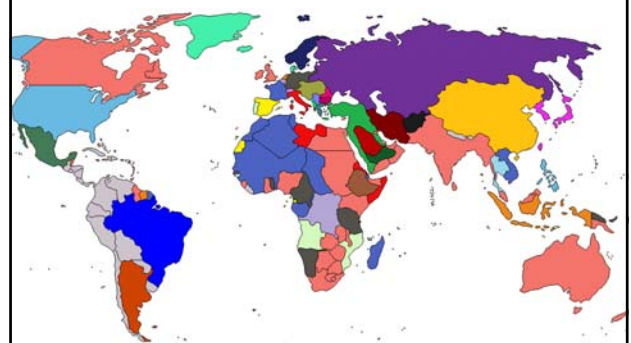
- During the Napoleonic Wars, the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved with the abdication of the Emperor in 1806.
- During the 19th century, the Kingdom of Prussia and the new German Empire were unified into a major European power.
- At the beginning of the 20th century, Germany was under the rule of Wilhelm II (better known as "The Kaiser").

Wilhelm's Full Title as German Emperor

His Imperial and Royal Majesty Wilhelm the Second, by the Grace of God, German Emperor and King of Prussia, Margrave of Brandenburg, Burgrave of Nuremberg, Count of Hohenzollern, Duke of Silesia and of the County of Glatz, Grand Duke of the Lower Rhine and of Posen, Duke of Saxony, of Angria, of Westphalia, of Pomerania and of Lunenburg, Duke of Schleswig, of Holstein and of Crossen, Duke of Magdeburg, of Bremen, of Guelderland and of Jülich, Cleves and Berg, Duke of the Wends and the Kashubians, of Lauenburg and of Mecklenburg, Landgrave of Hesse and in Thuringia, Margrave of Upper and Lower Lusatia, Prince of Orange, of Rugen, of East Friesland, of Paderborn and of Pyrmont, Prince of Halberstadt, of Münster, of Minden, of Osnabrück, of Hildesheim, of Verden, of Kammin, of Fulda, of Nassau and of Moers, Princely Count of Henneberg, Count of the Mark, of Ravensberg, of Hohenstein, of Tecklenburg and of Lingen, Count of Mansfeld, of Sigmaringen and of Veringen, Lord of Frankfurt.



Colonialism, c. 1900



French political cartoon from the late 1890's. A pie represents China and is being divided between caricatures of:

- Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom
- William II of Germany
- Nicholas II of Russia
- The French Marianne
- Meiji Emperor of Japan

A stereotypical Qing official throws up his hands to try and stop them, but is powerless.



HMS Dreadnought, 1906



SMS Rheinland, 1910

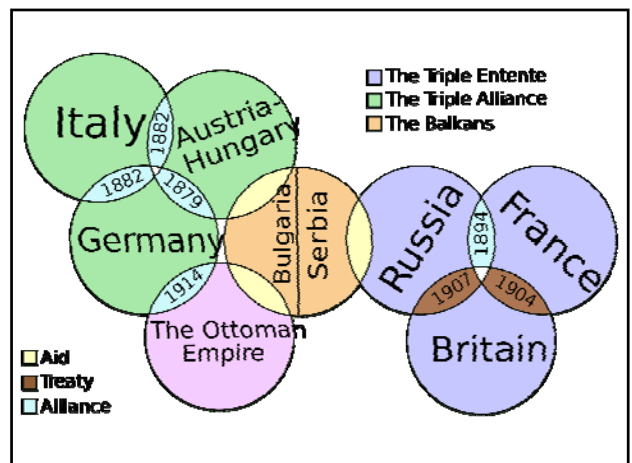
British Fleet



German Fleet

European Treaties Prior to WWI

- | | |
|---|------|
| • The Dual Alliance | 1879 |
| • Three Emperor's League | 1881 |
| • Austro-Serbian Alliance | 1881 |
| • The Triple Alliance | 1882 |
| • The Austro-German-Romanian Alliance | 1883 |
| • The Franco-Russian Alliance | 1894 |
| • The Russo-Bulgarian Military Convention | 1902 |
| • The Entente Cordiale | 1904 |
| • The Anglo-Russian Entente | 1907 |
| • The Triple Entente | 1907 |



On 28 June 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian-Serb, assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo.



World War I

A.k.a. WWI, the First World War, the Great War, the War to End All Wars

Peace, a poem by Rupert Brooke (1914)

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
And all the little emptiness of love!

Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there,
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
But only agony, and that has ending;
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

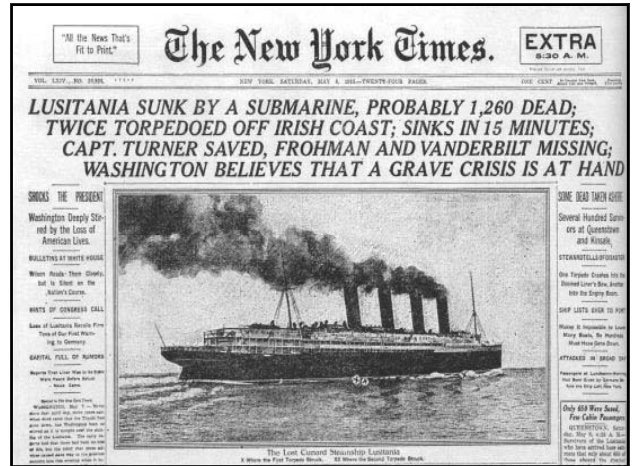
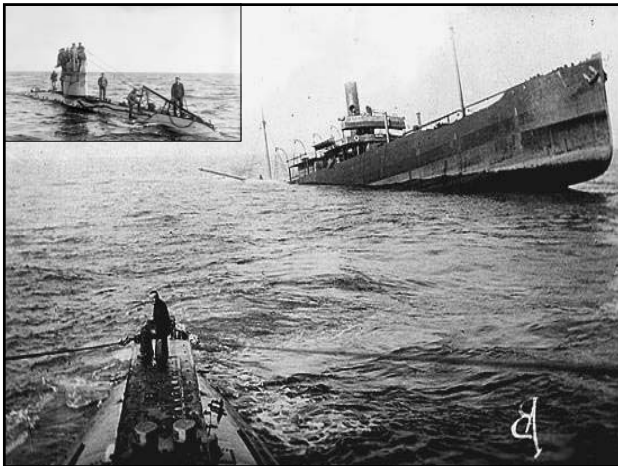
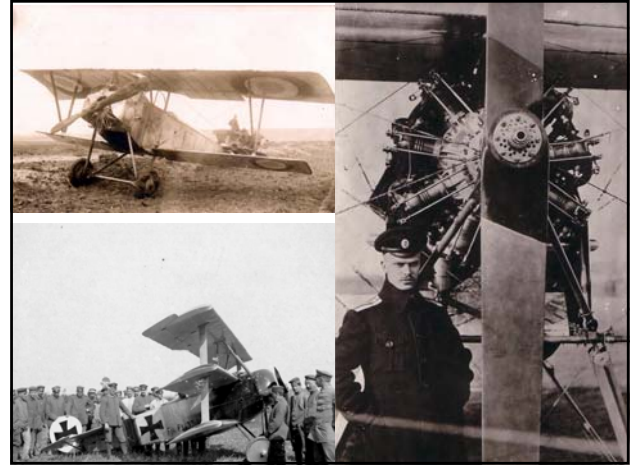


Innovations in Warfare



Machine guns changed the face of warfare; instead of heroic cavalry charges over open fields, trench warfare became the norm. Extremely long range artillery, tanks, poison gas and airplanes were also employed for the first time in WWI. These new weapons however, did not make the war end more quickly, they just made the death toll rise.







World War I was a global war which took place primarily in Europe from 1914 to 1918. Over 40 million casualties resulted, including approximately 20 million military and civilian deaths.

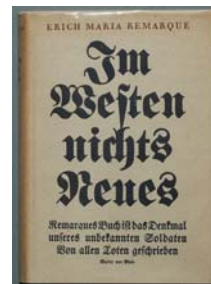


The “Great War” and Its Significance

- Drastic loss (waste) of life...
- Sociopolitical consequences
 - October Revolution (Russia)
 - Hitler’s National Socialist movement
 - Japanese Empire
- Technical innovations
 - Transportation and Manufacture (cars, planes)
 - Communication (radios)
 - Entertainment (movies)

All Quiet on the Western Front

- Written by Erich Maria Remarque, 1929.



A constant theme in Remarque's book is that the youth of Germany (and the world) had been betrayed by teachers, parents, and other leaders who told them war was a great patriotic adventure.

“The first bombardment showed us our mistake, and under it the world as they had taught it to us broke in pieces.”

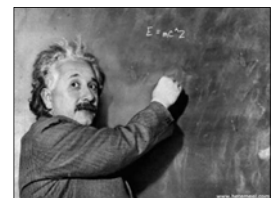
The ‘Lost Generation’

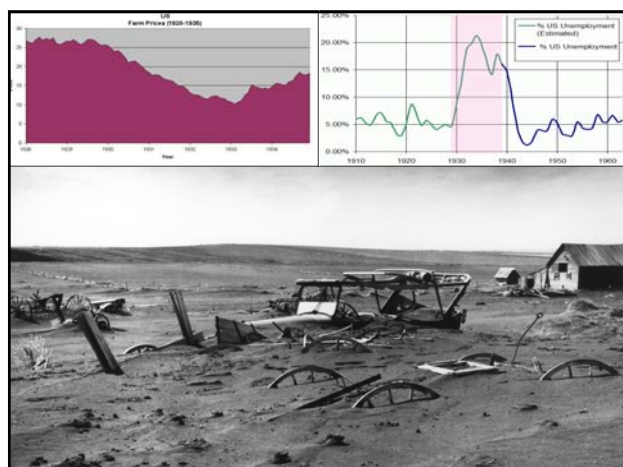
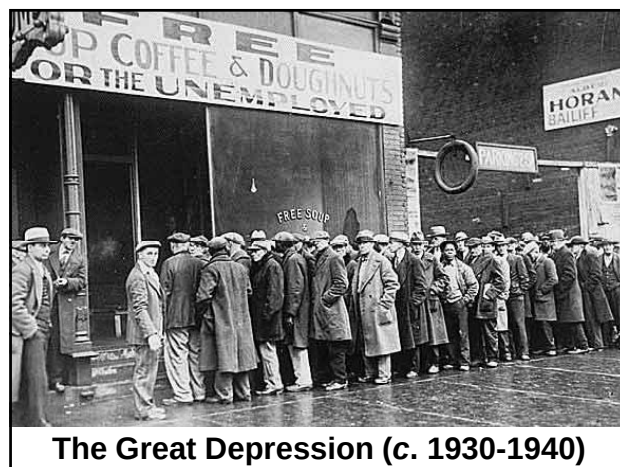
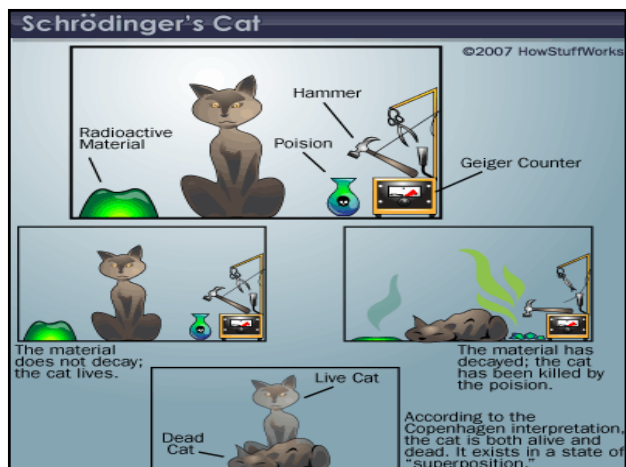


- The 'Lost Generation' is a phrase made popular by Ernest Hemingway in his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, to refer to literary ex-pats who lived in Paris and other parts of Europe after WWI.
- For the British, the 'Lost Generation' is the generation of young men (i.e. future leaders) that died in the trenches of WWI.

After WW I, where is truth and peace of mind to be found?

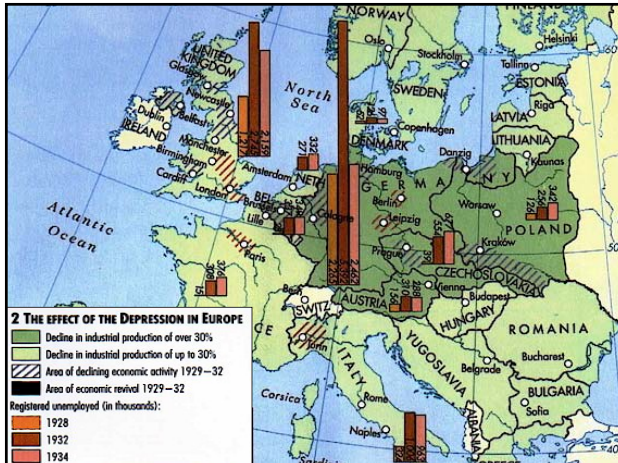
- By following our leaders?
- In God and religion?
 - Nietzsche - “God is dead”
- In Newton’s mechanical universe?
 - 1905: Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity
 - 1927: Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle





Dorothea Lange famously photographed destitute migrant workers in California, 1936.

Migrant Mother depicts Florence Owens Thompson, age 32, a mother of seven children.



Fascism: A system of government marked by centralization of authority under a dictator, stringent socioeconomic controls, suppression of the opposition through terror and censorship, and typically a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism. Most famously used in Germany, Italy, and Japan after WWI.

Hermann Göring

"It is always a simple matter to drag the people along. . . That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."



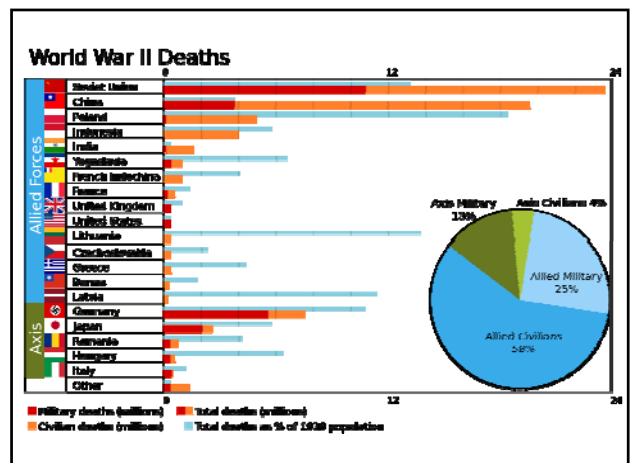
Soviet Union: The Great Purge

- Following Lenin's Red Terror, Stalin orchestrated The Great Purge, a series of campaigns of political repression and persecution in the Soviet Union against its own citizens in 1936-1938.
- According to the declassified Soviet archives, during 1937 and 1938, the NKVD detained 1,548,367 victims, of whom 681,692 were shot - an average of 1,000 executions a day.
- Additionally, from 1929-1953, perhaps 20 million people were arrested and placed in Gulags, forced labor camps. At least a million of those people died while imprisoned.

World War II



World War II was a global military conflict which involved a majority of the world's nations, including all of the great powers. Over 70 million people, the majority of them civilians, were killed, making it the deadliest conflict in human history.





Winston Churchill



Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945 (that is, for most of the Second World War) and again from 1951 to 1955. Churchill was also an officer in the British Army, a historian, a writer, and an artist. He is the only British Prime Minister to have received the Nobel Prize in Literature, and was the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States.



Into the Storm



1941 – Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor brings the USA into WW2.

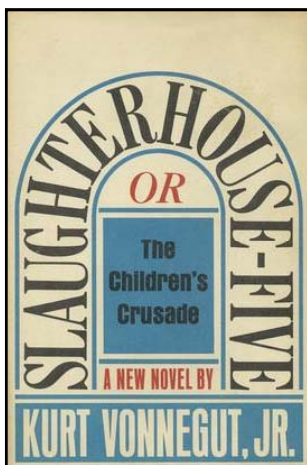
"Into the Jaws of Death — U.S. Troops wading through water and Nazi gunfire", circa 1944-06-06.



June 6, 1944 - Allied troops invade Normandy with the famous D-Day landing operations.
January 27, 1945 - Soviet troops liberate the Auschwitz concentration camp.



The **Holocaust** is the term used to describe the genocide of approximately six million European Jews during World War II, as part of a program of deliberate extermination planned and executed by Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler.



Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) was based on his own experiences as a prisoner of war at Dresden during the February 1945 bombing. Vonnegut recalled "utter destruction" and "carnage unfathomable." The Germans put him and other POWs to work gathering bodies for mass burial. "But there were too many corpses to bury. So instead the Nazis sent in troops with flamethrowers. All these civilians' remains were burned to ashes."

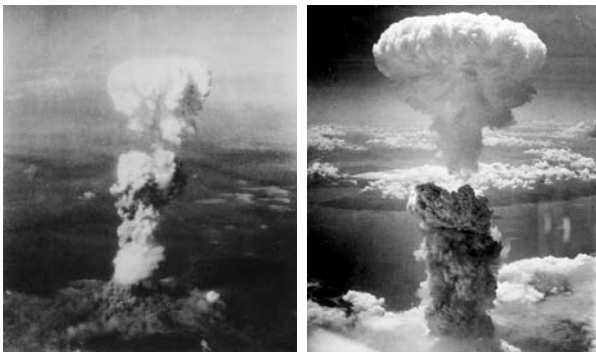




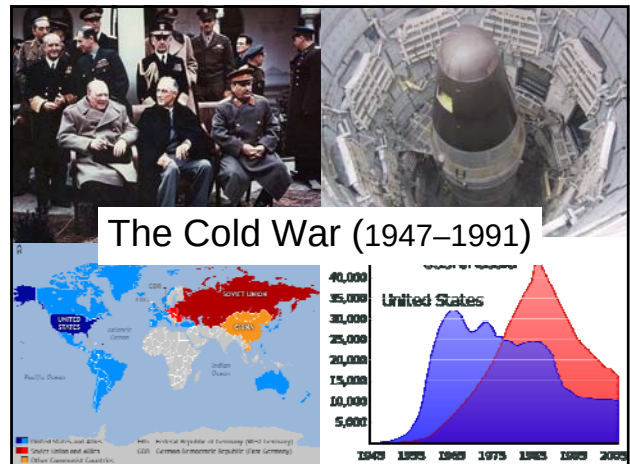
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_War



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_bombing_during_World_War_II



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki



You've been through the First World War, the Great Depression, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the invention, use, and proliferation of nuclear weapons...

Science and religion no longer seem to provide the comfort and certainty that they used to...

How are you feeling?

Nihilism

- The term nihilism is sometimes used synonymously with *anomie* to denote the general mood of despair at the pointlessness of existence that one has when they realize there are no necessary norms, rules, or laws.
- Most commonly, nihilism is presented in the form of existential nihilism which argues that life is without meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value.
- The existentialists were not nihilists. Their philosophy tries to find a way out of nihilism.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855)

- Founder of Existentialism
- He made philosophy personal by posing these questions:
 - Who am I?
 - What am I doing here?
 - Where am I going?
- He rejected the traditional pieties and systematic answers of both philosophy and the orthodox Christianity of his time.
- Instead, he embraced a vision of faith in which belief is considered to be a real choice and one that absolutely can't be validated or justified by reason.



Sartre (1905-1980)

- French existentialist philosopher, playwright, novelist... etc.
- Popularized existentialism
- *Being and Nothingness* (1943)
- *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (1946)
 - Seen by many as one of the defining texts of the Existentialist movement.
 - “Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world - and defines himself afterwards.”



Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973)

- Coined the term “existentialism”
- Leading Christian existentialist
- Marcel found his philosophical starting point in a condition of metaphysical alienation; the human individual searching for harmony in a transient life.
- Although Jean-Paul Sartre adopted the term “existentialism” for his own philosophy in the 1940s, Sartre's thought has been described as “almost diametrically opposed” to that of Marcel.



Camus (1913-1960)

- An Algerian-born French author, philosopher, and journalist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1957.
- Rejected the label of being an existentialist, but devoted his life to opposing the philosophy of nihilism while still delving deeply into individual freedom.
- *The Stranger* (1942)
- *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942)



“I am not an existentialist.”

Main Themes of Existentialism

- **Alienation:** This is the feeling that you're a stranger in your own life, a stranger in the world.
- **Anxiety:** This is the feeling of unease you get when you start to recognize that life is absurd.
- **Forlornness:** This is the feeling of loneliness you get when you realize that no one can help you make sense of your existence.
- **Death:** This is the ultimate context for all human actions and an important source of the absurdity of life.

Main Themes of Existentialism

- **Absurdity:** For the existentialists, life is absurd; it makes no sense and has no meaning or ultimate purpose, but human beings need life to make sense, to have meaning and purpose.
- **Rejection of meaning-giving narratives:** It isn't enough to say that life is absurd; the existentialists repeatedly make the point that when philosophy, religion, or science tries to make sense of life, the attempts always fail.

Main Themes of Existentialism

- **Individuality:** An important part of developing an authentic and satisfying life is individuality. Reason, science, and systems that try to cover up the absurdity of life often take individuality from you.
- **Passion/engagement:** Being passionate or engaged is another important aspect of living an authentic life, and it's under attack from the same forces that take away your individuality.

Main Themes of Existentialism

- **Responsibility:** Everyone bears responsibility. If no one is going to give you a guidebook to life, you have to bear responsibility for making your way through it and creating some kind of meaning for it.
- **Authenticity:** People want authenticity — to live in a way that's in tune with the truth of who they are as human beings and the world they live in.

Steps Towards Existentialism

1. The Unexamined Life
 - One believes that life has meaning.
2. Existentialist Crisis
 - Something happens to cause one to lose faith in the meaning of life. Does life have any meaning?
3. Nihilism
 - Realization that it's impossible to 'prove' life has meaning.
 - Nihilist despair is too much to deal with, thus one is forced to choose a way out...

The Choice (from an existentialist's perspective)

Option A: Just don't deal with it, go back to the unexamined life?

Option B: Choose to believe in "fairy tales"?

– Like religion or any other established system of belief.

Option C: Suicide?

Option D: Escape w/drugs?

[Existentialists would consider all of these choices the easy way out, for cowards only.]

Option "E": Choose to live an "authentic" life.

- Courageously accept the responsibility of the choice
- Independently choose the manner in which you find meaning in life.
- But remain aware of the true absurdity of the human condition.

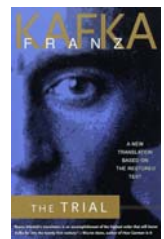


Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*

What would happen if one day you woke up and found yourself transformed into a gigantic insect?

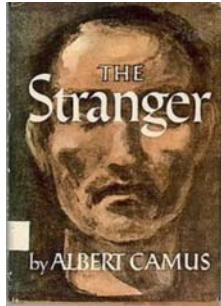
Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, 1926

- *The Trial* tells a story of a man who is arrested, tried, convicted and executed without ever learning what his crime was.
- The parable within Kafka's novel highlights the essence of his philosophy. Assigned unique roles in life, individuals must search deep within the apparent absurdity of existence to achieve spiritual self-realization.

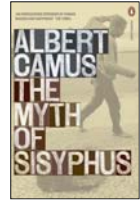


Camus' *The Stranger*, 1942

The story of an emotionally detached, amoral young man named Meursault. He does not cry at his mother's funeral, does not believe in God, and kills a man he barely knows without any discernible motive. For his crime, Meursault is deemed a threat to society and sentenced to death. When he comes to accept the "gentle indifference of the world," he finds peace with himself and with the society that persecutes him.



Three different Sisyphus's

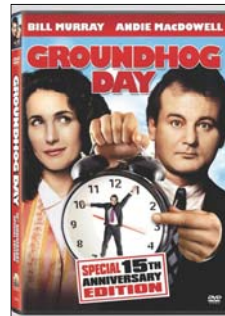


In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was a king punished in the underworld by being cursed to roll a huge boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, and to repeat this process throughout eternity.

Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*

- *The Myth of Sisyphus* is a 1942 philosophical essay by Albert Camus.
- In the essay, Camus introduces his philosophy of the absurd: man's futile search for meaning, unity and clarity in the face of an unintelligible world devoid of God and eternal truths or values.
- Does the realization of the absurd require suicide? Camus answers: "No. It requires revolt."
- At the end of the essay Camus writes, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

In the 1993 movie *Groundhog Day*, Phil, a TV weatherman, gets trapped living the same day over and over again in a small American town.



What does Phil do after he realizes he's stuck in the same day forever?

- Hedonism
- Suicide
- Self-improvement
- Altruism
- All of the above



1. How and why was Phil trapped?
2. Is the movie religious? Which religion?
3. How would you characterize the phases that Phil goes through?
4. How is Phil's journey related to Existentialism?

Consider Phil's Situation...



- Alienation
- Anxiety
- Forlornness
- Death
- Absurdity
- Rejection of M.G. Narratives
- Individuality
- Passion/Engagement
- Responsibility
- Authenticity