Crash Course European History Preview

Crash Course: European History
https://youtube.com/watch?v=WhtuC9dp0Hk
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/WhtuC9dp0Hk

Hello, and welcome to Crash Course History. I'm John Green. You may know me, because I once hosted a series of Crash Course videos on world history which, depending on your perspective, was either far too Eurocentric or not nearly Eurocentric enough. Well, we're about to get rather Eurocentric, because over the--

Mr. Green! Mr. Green! Right, I remember when--

Yeah, you're retired, me from the past. I can't play 17 anymore.

Anyway, starting today, we're going to explore the history of Europe, beginning with the closing years of the so-called Middle Ages, and ending with Europe's recent, and possibly temporary, great turn toward political and economic unity.

But, here at the start, I want to note two things. First, that Europe is a made-up idea. Like, in parts of eastern Europe, students learn that there are six continents, not seven, because Eurasia is treated as a single landmass, on account of it being, you know, a single landmass.

But then, Eurasia is both physically and geopolitically inseparable from Africa, just as North America is from South America. And Australia is more an island than a continent, and don't even get me started on Antarctica. So, in some ways, there are two continents.

We don't even completely agree what constitutes Europe. The dividing line is often constructed as the Ural Mountains, which would mean that half of Russia is European and the other half Asian. And, is western Kazakhstan Europe? The southeastern border of Europe is also problematic. Is Turkey Europe? And, if not, was the Roman Empire a European Empire only when its capital was Rome and not for the many centuries in which its capital was Constantinople?

But, of course, like many made up ideas, Europe is also real. And, in these videos, we'll attempt to introduce you to the big political economic, and military, and cultural developments in recent European history.

The second thing I want to say is that one cannot look at the history of Europe in isolation, because, as part of the Afroeurasian landmass, Europe has long been in contact and conversation with other parts of the world. And so it's impossible to examine its history in isolation, because it was never isolated.

In early human history, when bands of hunter-gatherers rarely reached populations of larger than a few dozen, people were relatively independent from those who lived far away from them. But, the story of humans is in some ways a story of growing connections. Like, three thousand years ago, everything most humans used had been made within their community, from clothing to tools to weapons to jewelry to ideas. Over time, though, our trade networks and cultural connections expanded, and more of us began to live in cities and to travel between communities.

By around a thousand years ago, for instance, Christianity (which was born in the Middle East) had become the dominant religion in Europe, and the Catholic Church was certainly extremely powerful. But, there were also other religions being practiced. Like, most of the Iberian peninsula, for instance, was controlled by the Islamic Caliphate of Cordoba, which had arrived from northern Africa.

Gunpowder, which was first developed in China, began being utilized in Europe around 1300, and the great disease pandemics that reshaped early modern Europe also came from Asia.

What I'm saying is that even Europe isn't really Eurocentric. We're going to try to emphasize the world's interconnectedness in this series, but any regional history risks isolating itself. So throughout, I hope you'll remember that Europe is a made-up idea and that it is nonetheless real, and that the lives of humans in Europe have long been shaped by the lives of humans elsewhere.

Our history will begin around the year 1300, with central Europe a tangle of kingdoms and city-states, and the continent in a purportedly Dark Age. Big changed are coming: the absolute devastation of the Black Death, a re-imagining of the relationship between peasant and lord, and questions about the role of the Catholic Church in political life.

But, before we get there, I want to flash forwards and backwards. In September of 1940, with Europe roiled by the second world war, and 18-year-old car mechanic named Marcel Ravidat was walking his dog, Robot, in the countryside of southwestern France when the dog disappeared down a hole. The next day, Marcel went to the spot with three friends to explore the hole, and after digging for a while, they found a cave with walls covered with paintings - paintings of horses and bison and even extinct species. It would eventually be established that some of these artworks were at least 17,000 years old. Two of the boys who found that cave were so profoundly moved by the artwork they saw that they camped outside the cave to protect it for over a year.

Now, there's nothing unique to Europe about very old cave paintings. They've been found in the Americas, in Indonesia, in Africa, in Australia. They have not been found in Antarctica, another argument against its continent-hood. And, don't tell me that continents are about geology not humans. Who do you think invented continents, rocks? I will confess to being a little human-centric when it comes to history.

Right, but cave paintings are not unique to Europe. But, what I find fascinating about ancient cave paintings is that they were often made over the course of many thousands of years, as hundreds of generations of humans lived in the same caves. Like, the paintings at Lascaux, for instance, were likely created over a span of around two thousand years. For two thousand years, a community of humans lived in this cave. Two thousand years. Two thousand years ago, Tiberius was the emperor of the Roman Empire.

Our history of Europe will span around 700 years, which is a long time, but it also isn't a long time, as it represents less than one half of one percent of human history. History, like so much else, changes as our perspective changes. And so, as we zoom into the history of Europe, let us not forget that we are zooming in.

Thanks for watching. I'll see you next time.

[Outro]

P.S. Have you ever wondered what's at the center of the Earth? Well, it turns out, it changes every week, but this week, it's yet another Earth. It's Earths all the way down, you see.