It is impossible to think about the contemporary world without the lasting impact Europe has had on it. But what are the deeper reasons for Europe to emerge as the dominant continent from the sixteenth century onwards? Why is it in crisis at present? Its physical, cultural, and economic geography will provide answers. Divided by landscape, language, religion, and war, Europe is a kind of test case for how all societies are supposed to function. The project of the European Union promises peace and prosperity for some 500 million people in 28 countries, but faces unprecedented challenges, from unemployment and xenophobia to ageing populations and climate change. The EU does not cover all of the continent, of course. Who is and could be a member state explains much about its complex history. This course will guide you from Europe’s physical make-up and urbanization to the formation of nation-states and the colonization of other continents, in order to understand the crisis today.

Instructor: Arun Saldanha (saldanha@umn.edu)

3 credits     no prerequisites
          awaiting LE Global Perspectives recertification