

Spring 2020 HIS 208-04 Course Syllabus

The Great War



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Office Hours: Available by appointment 8:30-5:00 Monday-Friday

Class Location and Time: 1214 MHRA Building, TR 5:00-6:15

*Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz-
The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?*

Do you remember the rats; and the stench

Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench, -

And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?

Do you ever stop and ask, "Is it all going to happen again?"

- *Aftermath* by Siegfried Sassoon (1919)

Course Description

The First World War began in the summer of 1914 as a conflict between the Great Powers of Europe, but quickly escalated from a continental contest between two powerful alliances to a war whose scale would grow to include Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas (North, Central, and South). Referred to at the time as "The War to End All Wars", its aftermath would lead to future conflicts throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. This course will explore the causes that pushed the European powers towards war, how and why it expanded beyond Europe, and the effects of the conflict on the nature of warfare and on the societies who committed to the fighting. This course will also analyze the consequences of The Great War such as the decline or collapse of the European powers, the Russian Revolution, the rise of the United States as a world power, and a bitter peace that arguably paved the way for an even more devastating conflict.

This course will provide an invaluable and interdisciplinary skillset to history majors and nonmajors alike by teaching how to critically interpret and analyze the past. The main goal of this course is to teach students how to understand changes over time, be able to describe how and why these changes occurred, and to use primary and secondary historical sources as evidence for

interpretation and analysis. Students should by the end of this course also have a greater understanding of how the causes and consequences of the First World War shaped the world in which they live today.

Course Goals and Outcomes:

A. General Education Historical Perspectives Student Learning Outcomes (**GHP**)

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives. (GHP 1)
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing. (GHP 2)

B. The Global Perspectives Student Learning Outcomes (**GL**)

1. Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse cultures.
2. Describe interconnections among regions of the world. (Must include substantial focus on at least one culture, nation, or sub-nationality beyond Great Britain and North America).
3. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives to analyze issues.

Required Reading:

Meyer, G. J. *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914-1918*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2007.

Neiberg, Michael S. *The World War I Reader: Primary and Secondary Sources*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. (Available online through the UNCG Library)

Gaudi, Robert. *African Kaiser: General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and the Great War in Africa, 1914-1918*. New York: Caliber, 2017.

Rogan, Eugene L. *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East*. New York: Basic Books, 2015. (Available online through the UNCG Library)

Any additional readings will be made available on Canvas. Be sure to read these before class along with the regular reading in order to participate in class discussion.

Writing Assignments:

There will be two writing assignments for the course this semester. Use Chicago Manual format and 12-point font when writing these papers. Handouts with further information will be provided in advance.

Writing Assignment 1: The Decision for War – With the exception of Great Britain, Canada, or the United States, choose any one of the nations that participated in WWI and write a 3-5-page paper on why that nation chose to enter the war. Be sure to describe the circumstances that led to that particular nation joining the war effort and why they joined a particular side (Allied Powers or Central Powers). **Due February 21**

Writing Assignment 2: The Consequence of War – When a nation decides to go to war, the course and/or outcome of that war can either benefit or threaten the future of that nation’s standing in many ways, such as that of international prestige and quality of life for its citizens. While some nations emerged from the Great War stronger than ever before, other nations who had enjoyed “great power” status for centuries either found their power diminished or their empires had collapsed entirely. Choose any one of the nations that participated in WWI, and write a 3-5-page paper describing how participation in the war either (or both) positively or negatively impacted it. **Due April 28**

Class Performance Evaluation

UNCG defines the grading system for undergraduates as follows:

A = Excellent	Achievement of distinction in several if not all of the following aspects: 1) completeness and accuracy of knowledge; 2) intelligent use of knowledge; 3) independence of work; 4) originality.
B = Good	General achievement superior to the acceptable standard defined as a letter grade of C. It involves excellence in some aspects of the work, as indicated in the definition of A.
C = Average	The acceptable standard for graduation. It involves such quality and quantity of work as may fairly be expected of a student of normal ability who gives to the course a reasonable amount of time, effort, and attention
D = Lowest passing grade	Work falling below the acceptable standards defined as a letter grade of C but which is of sufficient quality and quantity to be counted in the hours of graduation, if balanced by superior work in other courses.
F = Failure	Indicates failure that may not be made up except by repeating the course

Grading Scale (point system)

A+ 100-97	A 96-93	A- 92-90
B+ 89-87	B 86-83	B- 82-80
C+ 79-77	C 76-73	C- 72-70
D+ 69-67	D 66-63	D- 62-60

F = 59 and below

Percentages of Final Grade:

Attendance/Participation	40%
Writing Assignment 1	15%
Writing Assignment 2	15%
Mid-Term	15%
Final Exam	15%

Class Policies

1) **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance at class meetings is not only required, but is also essential to passing this course. Students are permitted three unexcused absences, and excused absences will require either a doctor’s note or some other form of legitimate documentation. If a student has more than six absences, it may result in being dropped from the class. Along

with the expectation that students attend this course, it is also expected that students be on time. Three instances of tardiness by an individual student will be counted as an absence.

2) **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

As mentioned earlier, attendance is required and essential. Class participation is the reason it is essential. Because demonstrating that they are analyzing and interpreting historical events and materials is the primary goal of this course, students are expected to demonstrate that they have read the required material prior to the assigned class and be prepared to discuss it.

3) **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments that are not turned in by electronically by 11:59pm of the assigned due date will be deducted 10 points from 100 for each day it is late. Assignments not turned in within ten days of the due date will not be accepted.

4) **PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. Historical study and research relies on the proper use of primary and secondary sources, and students are expected to properly cite any materials that are used in their writing assignments. Any instance of plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment, and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for appropriate action. Blatant plagiarism (such as copying and pasting text) or cheating will be grounds for failing the course and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. For the full Academic Integrity Policy of the University, go to the website listed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0rFGGhJvbDHUExSZmFFaWFmb00/view>

5) **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Laptops and tablets are acceptable to have in class during regular discussions in order to take notes. Cellphones must be turned off during the duration of ANY class, and NO electronic devices are permitted during exams.

Course Schedule

Week 1

January 14 – Introductions, review of the syllabus and course expectations, and discussion of importance of the First World War as a historical turning point.

January 16 – The Alliance System/Trap

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 2 “Background: The Hapsburgs”, Chapter 3 “Background: The Hohenzollerns” and Chapter 4 “Background: The Romanovs”

Week 2

January 21 – Escalating Tensions between the Alliances Prior to July 1914

Readings: *The World War I Reader*, 1.1 “*The Great Illusion, 1910*”; *A World Undone*, Chapter 1 “*The Black Hand Descends*”, and “*Background: The Serbs*”

January 23 – The July Crisis of 1914

Readings: *The World War I Reader*, 1.2 “*Germany and the Next War*”; *A World Undone*, Chapter 2 “*Never Again*”, and Chapter 3 “*Setting Fire to Europe*”

Week 3

January 28 – The Collapse of Peace

Readings: *The World War I Reader*, 1.3 “*The Willy-Nicky Telegrams*”; *A World Undone*, Chapter 4 “*Secrets and Lies*”, and Chapter 5 “*Fear Is A Bad Counselor*”

January 30 – The War Begins “*Poor Little Belgium*”

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 7 “*The Iron Dice Roll*”, and Chapter 8 “*First Blood*”; *The World War I Reader*, 3.1 “*The Destruction of Louvain*”

Week 4

February 4 – “*The Miracle of the Marne*”

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 9 “*A Perfect Balance*”, and Chapter 10 “*To the Marne*”

February 6 – Stalemate Sets In

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 11 “*Back from the Marne*”, and Chapter 12 “*Flanders Fields*”

Week 5

February 11 – The Italian Front

Readings: (Uploaded to Canvas) *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front*, Chapter 1 “*A Mania for Expansion*”, and Chapter 2 “*We Two Alone*”

February 13 – The Ottoman Empire and the Central Powers

Readings: *The Fall of the Ottomans*, Chapter 4 “*Opening Salvos: Basra, Aden, Egypt, and the Eastern Mediterranean*”, and Chapter 5 “*Launching Jihad: Ottoman Campaigns in the Caucasus and the Sinai*”

Week 6

February 18 – The African Front

Readings: *African Kaiser*, Chapter 13 “The War at Sea”, Chapter 14 “Tanga”, and Chapter 15 “War on the Rufiji”

February 20 – Gallipoli and the Armenian Genocide

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 16 “Gallipoli”, and Chapter 17 “Background: Genocide”

***Writing Assignment 1 Due on Friday February 21**

Week 7

February 25 – Review of the War Through 1915

Readings: *The Fall of the Ottomans*, Chapter 9 “The Invasion of Mesopotamia”; *African Kaiser*, Chapter 17, “The War Against the Railroad”, and Chapter 18, “Wreck of the Konigsberg”

February 27 – Mid-term Exam

Week 8

March 3 – Spring Break (Class Does Not Meet)

March 5 – Spring Break (Class Does Not Meet)

Week 9

March 10 – The Battle of Verdun

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 19 “Verdun: Preparation”, and Chapter 20 “Verdun: Execution”

March 12 – The Battle of the Somme

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 23 “The Somme”; *The World War I Reader*, 3.2 “The Historic First of July”

Week 10

March 17 – The African Front Continued

Readings: *African Kaiser*, Chapter 19 “The Battle for Kilimanjaro”, Chapter 20 “War in the Rainy Season”, and Chapter 21 “The Long Retreat”

March 19 – Women and the War

Readings: *The World War I Reader*, 4.1 “Letters from a Lost Generation”, and 4.2 “An English Wife in Berlin”

Week 11

March 24 – Wearing Down on Both Sides (1916)

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 24 “Exhaustion”; *The Fall of the Ottomans*, Chapter 11 “The Arab Revolt”

March 26 – The Russian Revolution

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 27 “Revolution and Intervention”

Week 12

March 31 – America Enters the War

Readings: (Uploaded to Canvas) *March 1917: On the Brink of War and Revolution*, Chapter 5 “We Have Had to Push, and Push, and Push”; *The World War I Reader*, 5.4 “Diggers and Doughboys: Australian and American Troop Interaction on the Western Front, 1918”

April 2 – The American Homefront

Readings: *The World War I Reader*, 4.4 “The Politics of Race”, TBA

Week 13

April 7 – Final Battles in Africa and the Middle East

Readings: *The Fall of the Ottomans*, Chapter 12 “Losing Ground: The Fall of Baghdad, the Sinai, and Jerusalem”; *African Kaiser*, Chapter 23 “Marching with a Shroud Maker”, and Chapter 24 “The English Motorcycle Messenger”

April 9 – The Collapse of the Central Powers

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 33 “Michael”, Chapter 35 “The Black Day of the German Army”, and Chapter 36 “The Sign of the Defeated”

Week 14

April 14 – The Great War Ends

Readings: *A World Undone*, Chapter 37 “The Fate of Men and Nations”, *The World War I Reader*, 5.1 “The Fourteen Points”, and 5.2 “Views on a Perspective Armistice”

April 16 – The War’s Non-Human Participants
Readings: TBA

Week 15

April 21 – The Pursuit of Peace

Readings: *The World War I Reader*, 6.1 “Peacemaking, 1919”, and 6.2 “British Diplomacy: The Hussein-McMahon Letters”

April 23 – “The War to End All Wars” . . . ?

Readings: *The World War I Reader*, 6.3 “The Peace to End All Peace”

Week 16

April 28 – Review for the Final Exam

***Writing Assignment 2 Due**

April 30 – Reading Day

Final Exam – Thursday, May 7 (7:00-10:00 P.M.)