

Hist 388-C02 The Great War
Summer 2009, George Mason University
Course: 7/6/09–7/31/09, Exam: 8/3/09
Mon., Wed., Fri, 7:00–10:05 p.m., Krug Hall 210
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office hours by appointment

Description

Some 9 to 10 million people lost their lives in the Great War between 1914 and 1918. Most of the dead were soldiers; however, the war affected the lives of nearly everyone, not only because of the mass mourning it inspired, but also because of its economic, social, cultural and political consequences. Why did Europe's great powers go to war? Why did they keep fighting? How did soldiers and civilians experience the war? What were its consequences? This course seeks to explore the First World War, a total war, from as many angles as possible, including politics, diplomacy, strategy, tactics, economics, class, gender, generation, and nationality. The course will center on discussions of assigned readings, which will feel heavy during this short term. We will also consider some films. Grades will be based on class participation, two short papers, a short book presentation, and exams.

Requirements

Grades for the course will be determined by the following six components:

- *Paper One* (3-4 pages) — 15%
- *Paper Two* (3-4 pages) — 15%
- *Book Presentation* (1-page summary for class; talk 5–10 min.)¹ — 10%
- *Midterm Exam* (short IDs, map) — 15%
- *Final Exam* (short IDs, possibly a map, essay)² — 25%
- *Class Participation* (attendance, informed effort)³ — 20%

Policies

- *Course updates and assignments* will be posted to my history courses blog at <http://historycourses.blogspot.com>. You are expected to visit it regularly. You may also ask questions about individual posts via the blog's comments function.
- *Other communication* outside of class will occur via email, which you are expected to check regularly. To contact me, please use my Mason email address from your own Mason account.

¹ I will provide a list of books from which you can choose. The time you have to speak will depend on class size.

² IDs on the final exam will come from readings after the midterm, but the essay options will be cumulative.

³ I reserve the right to give surprise quizzes on the readings. If this happens, I will factor the results into students' class participation grades.

- *Attendance* in class is mandatory and will count towards your class participation grade. If you are sick or are participating in a school-sponsored sporting event, please present me with documentation so you do not get penalized for your absence. You are also expected to get notes from a classmate for the material you missed. Please note that your work or training schedule is not a legitimate reason for missing class.
- *Late work* submitted during the semester will be marked down by as much as five points per day. No late work will be accepted after the final exam.
- *Academic honesty* is essential not only to the success of the course, but also to your academic and professional careers. Hence, you are expected to know and abide by the GMU Honor System at <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/9798/honorcod.html>. I report violations.
- *Students requiring an academic accommodation* should see me immediately and also contact the Office of Disability Services in SUB 1, room 222. All academic accommodations must be arranged through this office. For more information, visit <http://ods.gmu.edu> or call 703–993–2474.

Reading

You can purchase the following required books at the Mason bookstore or online via an Amazon link on the course blog. If you order any books online, please take into account availability and delivery time, which can vary according to seller and title.

- Samuel R. Williamson, Jr. and Russel Van Wyk, *July 1914: Soldiers, Statesmen, and the Coming of the Great War* [ISBN 0312120109].
- Hew Strachan, *The First World War* [ISBN 0143035185].
- Svetlana Palmer and Sarah Wallis (eds.), *Intimate Voices from the First World War* [ISBN 0060584203].
- Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* [ISBN 0395937582].
- Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War* [ISBN 0521666317].
- Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, 2nd ed. [ISBN 0521547806].

Schedule

When looking at the reading schedule below, please keep the following points in mind:

- The readings must be completed prior to the class for which they are scheduled.
- Unless specific chapters are mentioned, read the whole book.
- Depending on how the conversation goes and how big the class is, I might assign a few additional articles to cover specific points not adequately addressed by the books we are reading. This is most likely to happen for July 31st.

M 7/6 (1) Introduction, (2) The Great War in Film

- W 7/8 The Great War in Film
- F 7/10 Origins of the War
– Read Williamson and Wyk, *July 1914*.
- M 7/13 Course of the War
– Read Strachan, *First World War*, chs. 1–6
- W 7/15 Course of the War
– Read Strachan, *First World War*, chs. 7–10
- F 7/17 Personal Narratives
– Read Palmer and Wallis, *Intimate Voices*.
- M 7/20 Midterm Exam
– Paper 1 is due via email by 11:59 p.m.
- W 7/22 War and Culture
Read Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*.
- F 7/24 Case Study: France in the Great War
– Read Smith, Audoin-Rouzeau, and Becker, *France and the Great War*.
- M 7/27 Case Study: Germany in the Great War
– Read Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*.
- W 7/29 Book Presentations and Stocktaking
- F 7/31 Book Presentations and Stocktaking⁴
– Paper 2 is due is due via email by 11:59 p.m.
- M 8/3 Final Exam

⁴ Depending on class size, we might be able to devote one of the two book presentation days to discussing an additional problem based on short articles or another film.