

**The First World War**  
**HIST 4250**  
**CRN \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Summer 2017**  
**M-F 8:00 – 11:25**  
**TLC 1203**

Professor: Dr. Tim Schroer  
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Office hours: 12:30 – 2:30 or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course will examine the political, economic, social, cultural, and military history of what George Kennan called the “seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century.” We will not confine our attention to the years 1914-1918. Instead, we will devote considerable effort to understanding the war’s origins and its legacy. Among the questions we will consider are the following: What caused the war? How did states respond to the challenge of waging “total war”? How did the war affect societies in the combatant nations? Why did a war of attrition develop and how did it persist for so long? How and why did a socialist revolution succeed in Russia in 1917? How did the United States shape the course of the war and of the peace? How should we evaluate the work of the peacemakers in Paris in 1919? What was the war’s legacy?

**Learning Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete the course will be able:

- to demonstrate an understanding of the history of the First World War;
- to recognize and to pose significant historical questions;
- to find useful primary sources;
- to analyze sources critically;
- to write in standard English; and
- to think historically.

**Required Materials:**

The following required books are available in the bookstore:

Michael Howard, *The First World War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0-19-920559-2.

Michael S. Neiberg, ed., *The World War I Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) ISBN 978-0-8147-5833-5.

**Grading**

Participation and quizzes:	15 percent
Daily writing:	15 percent
Paper:	15 percent
Oral Presentation:	15 percent
Midterm examination:	15 percent
Final examination:	25 percent

Thoughtful contributions made in class discussions will be credited in the class participation grade. Behavior (such as tardiness) that impedes other students’ learning will be penalized. The papers will be graded on the basis of the quality of the analysis and the writing. Each day students should come to class prepared for a quiz over the assigned reading.

Each day students will bring to class two copies of a short, typed paragraph responding to questions about the readings and submit one copy to the instructor at the beginning of class. The questions will be posed in advance of a

reading. The questions for day two are: What was Norman Angell's thesis? How does that compare to Friedrich von Bernhardi's views? Each response paper will be graded as either constituting a good-faith effort (GFE) or not. These will translate into the following grades:

- A 8 or more GFEs
- B 6-7 GFEs
- C 5 GFEs
- D 4 GFEs
- F 3 or fewer

Each student will make a ten-minute oral presentation to the class on a subject related to the course. The presentation should focus on discussion of a primary source not assigned in the course that illuminates some aspect of the First World War. Students may find useful primary sources in the following ways: among the two assigned books' suggested further readings or their bibliographies; in the *New York Times* library database; in The First World War library electronic database (<http://www.firstworldwar.amdigital.co.uk/>); or in novels.

The midterm will include an extract from a primary source that is *not* assigned in the course. Students will be asked to use it, along with the material covered in the course, to write an essay answering a significant historical question explored in the first week of the course. Students will *not* have a choice among several essay questions.

The final examination will be cumulative but will not cover the question asked in the midterm. It will focus on essay questions. Students will have some choice on which essay questions they choose to write.

No extra credit will be offered.

### **Policies**

I expect each student to understand and to comply with the University of West Georgia's policies on Academic Honor and Academic Dishonesty. They may be found in the Student Handbook, on the web at <http://www.westga.edu/documents/catalogs.php>.

Academic honesty prohibits taking credit for someone else's work. Justice requires that punishment fit the infraction. Egregious academic dishonesty will result in failing the course and may also bring additional penalties imposed by the university.

I encourage any student who has questions or needs help with the course to come to my office hours or send me an email to set up a time to talk. In addition, students may wish to consult with the Writing Center (<http://www.westga.edu/~writing>).

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and university policy, I will make reasonable accommodation for any recognized disability. Students should contact me during the first week of the course and present documentation from the University's Student Development Center.

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized by deducting one letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

I strongly encourage students to attend class. Students who attend class tend to learn more and get better grades than those who do not. Class discussion sometimes affords new insights that cannot be planned or predicted. In case of absence, it is the responsibility of the student to obtain notes from a classmate covering what was missed. I do not penalize students for absences, but students receive no credit on any tests or quizzes on missed class days. A student who does not take a quiz or test in class with the rest of the class receives a zero. I do not permit students to take any test, quiz, or other graded work at any time other than in class as scheduled except in rare cases of prior approval or with a physician's note.

For university-wide policies, please see:

[http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common\\_Language\\_for\\_Course\\_Syllabi.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf)

## Course Schedule

Students are expected to have mastered the assigned reading and assignments before each class meeting.

- Mon. May 4      Introduction  
On the eve of war
- Tue. May 5      The origins of the war  
Reading:        Howard, 1-26  
                      Neiberg, 1-88
- Excerpt from *The War Memoirs of David Lloyd George* (CourseDen)
- The Blank Check (CourseDen)
- “Making Sense of the Madness” in *The Month that Changed the World: July 1914*, by Gordon Martel, 401-31 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). (CourseDen)
- Wed. May 6      The opening of the war  
Reading:        Howard, 27-36  
                      Neiberg, 91-96, 148-57, 175-83
- The Kaiser speaks  
[http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=815](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=815)
- The SPD on the coming of the war  
[http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=816](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=816)
- Walter Rathenau on the war economy (reserve)
- War loan posters (reserve)
- Thu. May 7      War of attrition  
Reading:        Neiberg, 123-47, 208-24  
                      Howard, 37-55
- Hobson on conscription and Crombie letter (reserve)
- Fri. May 8      Societies at war  
Reading:        Neiberg, 227-52, and p. 271
- Manifesto of 93 German professors (reserve)
- German Foreign Office, “Employment, contrary to International Law, of Colored Troops upon the European Arena of War by England and France” (Berlin, 1915) (reserve)
- Susan Grayzel, “Liberating Women? Examining Gender, Morality and Sexuality in First World War Britain and France,” in *Evidence, History and the Great War*, ed. Gail Braybon (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 113-34 (reserve).
- Posters depicting nurses (reserve)
- Mon. May 11     Midterm examination  
*The Battle of the Somme*
- Tue. May 12     The campaigns of 1916 and the Russian revolutions

- Reading: Paper option one due  
Howard, 56-67  
Neiberg, 109-22, 184-94
- Middlebrook, Excerpt from *The First Day on the Somme* (reserve)
- Lenin's April Theses  
[http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod03\\_1917/evidence\\_detail\\_31.html](http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod03_1917/evidence_detail_31.html)
- Miliukov's Note on War Aims, April 18/May 1, 1917  
[http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod03\\_1917/evidence\\_detail\\_30.html](http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod03_1917/evidence_detail_30.html)
- Wed. May 13 Toward the breaking point  
Paper option two due  
Reading: Howard, 68-94  
Neiberg, 97-108, 158-72, 195-207, 272-88, 312-22
- Tim Cook, "The Politics of Surrender: Canadian Soldiers and the Killing of Prisoners in the Great War," *The Journal of Military History* 70 (2006): 637-66. Access through library database.
- Thu. May 14 The war's end  
Reading: Howard, 85-112  
Neiberg, 291-311
- Ludendorff admits defeat  
[http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=814](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=814)
- Fri. May 15 Peacemaking  
Reading: Howard, 113-19  
Neiberg, 325-66
- Mon. May 18 The war's legacy  
Paper option three due  
Reading: Wilfred Owen, *Dulce et Decorum Est*  
<http://www.rjgeib.com/heroes/owen/owen-poetry.html>
- Ezra Pound excerpt  
<http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/fight/fight.html>
- John Oxenham, *Angels? Why Not?* (reserve)
- John Steele Gordon, "What We Lost in the Great War," *American Heritage Magazine* 43 (July/August 1992)  
<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/what-we-lost-great-war>
- Gary Sheffield on "The Aftermath and the Consequences" (reserve)
- Tue. May 19 Reading Day
- Mandatory Final Examination**  
Wed. May 20 8:00-10:00 am

## Paper Assignment

Students must write a typed, three-page, double-spaced paper for the course. One letter grade will be deducted for each day a paper is late. The paper assignment is intended to get students to read primary sources closely, critically, and empathetically. Each paper should state a thesis that it supports with evidence. The papers will be graded on the basis of the quality of the analysis and the writing, including grammar and spelling.

**Do not use any material beyond the assigned readings.** These are not research papers. Be careful to avoid plagiarism in your essay. See Appendix A to the University of West Georgia Student Handbook. Where you draw from a source, be sure to cite your source. Every paragraph in the body of the paper thus likely must include at least one citation to the source. You may use the following simplified citation format in citing your source: (30). If you take words directly from the source, be sure to place that borrowing inside of quotation marks. If in doubt, cite your source.

Option one is due Tuesday, May 12. This paper calls for comparison and contrasting of the primary source by Philip Gibbs in Neiberg and the Middlebrook reading on reserve. What points are the two selections making? What evidence do they offer? How persuasive are they? How reliable are the sources? How useful is the Gibbs source in understanding the events of the July 1, 1916, or for some other purpose?

Option two is due Wednesday, May 13. This paper should analyze what the excerpt from Frederic Manning's novel reveals about soldiers' motivations for fighting. How and why do the characters maintain the will to fight? How reliable does this source appear, especially in light of the secondary sources in Neiberg written by Sheffield and Ashworth? How useful is this source for understanding the question of how and why a war of attrition developed and how it persisted?

Option three is due Monday, May 18. This paper should analyze the legacy of the war through at least three of the readings assigned for this class period. The paper should address the works by John Steele Gordon and Gary Sheffield, as well as at least one of the literary works, as it considers the question: what was the war's legacy?

In grading the papers, I will consider the following questions:

- Does the paper properly acknowledge its sources?
- Does the paper clearly state a thesis?
- Does the paper demonstrate thoughtful analysis of the material?
- Does the paper effectively use evidence to support its analysis?
- Does the paper have a coherent organization?
- Does the paper effectively express its ideas in language and style appropriate to the reader?