HIST 404: The First World War, 1914-1918
Dr. Alexander Howlett
howlettalexander@gmail.com
Winter 2020, Tuesdays & Thursdays

Course Subject

The globalized 21st century international order that exists today originated in the aftermath of the First World War. This course examines the war in totality, from its origins, to the fighting of global military campaigns on multiple fronts in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, including the home front and the socio-cultural impact of total war on the international order.

Learning Outcomes

Students will gain an appreciation for the military and naval events of the war, the technological and military developments that defined mass warfare, the impact of total war mobilization including new dimensions of warfare such as air power and submarines. Students will develop knowledge of the transformation on the home front, the impact on pre-war conceptions of class, race and gender, and the introduction of modern state institutions that emerged as a result of the war. Students will learn about the creation of the post-war League of Nations, the Versailles treaty system, and the collapse of the ancien regime empires. The creation of new Republics, in Germany, Austria and Turkey will be examined, and the historiography of the Bolshevik Revolution and Russian Civil War introduced. Students will be equipped to understand the operational conduct of the war, the political and diplomatic outcome, and the modernization of socio-economy on the home front. Students will cultivate the ability to discuss important controversies and debates in First World War historiography, while developing analytical skills for critical reading of primary sources.
Course Structure

The course is divided into four units, organized chronologically and thematically. Each week will discuss a key campaign or military action, while also introducing important developments elsewhere. Weekly lecture topics are addressed on Tuesdays, with seminars held on Thursdays for discussion of assigned journal articles and other readings including primary sources.

Assignments

Participation: 25%

Students are expected to arrive to class on time, prepared to engage, with readings completed.

Group Presentations: 25%

Students will be divided into groups of three at the beginning of the class. Rotating groups will prepare summaries and analysis of the weekly reading material, and one group member will present each week. Students will become familiar with speaking in an academic setting, developing analysis collectively, and engaging with their colleagues. Students should for class discussions by 1) briefly summarizing the reading material 2) highlighting important areas of interest 3) preparing questions for the seminar group.

Research paper review: 20%

Students will complete a short 1,500 midterm literature review, utilizing secondary and primary sources. Students will be graded based on engagement with the material and depth of analysis.

Final paper: 30%

Students will prepare a 2,500-word final research paper based on selected topics, or topics of their choosing. Make sure to clear topics in advance with the professor. Students will be graded based on 1) clarity of thesis, 2) coherency of argument, 3) depth of research, and 4) engagement with the material and primary sources.

All assignments must be submitted one time, should be printed, double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman, and include page numbers and the students’ name and student numbers.

Grading Assessment

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**Required:**


**Suggested:**

John Keegan *The First World War*, 2000


Dennis Showalter, *Instrument of War, the German Army 1914-18*, 2016


Dominic Hughes & Benedict Phillips, *The Oxford Union Guide to Successful Public Speaking*

David Zabecki, *Generals’ War, Operational Level Command on the Western Front in 1918*, 2018


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The Taking of Vimy Ridge, Easter Monday 1917 by Richard Jack. The arrest of Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo, July 1914, and a merchant convoy at sea in 1918
Unit I: Origins of War, July Crisis & the 1914 campaign

Week 1, January 9: Introduction

Lecture: The Historiography of the First World War after the Centenary

Week 2, January 14: The Origins of the War

Lecture: Militarism, Social Darwinism, the rise of Germany, the naval arms race, the Franco-Russian entente, the Central Powers.

Winter, Vol. III, Chapter 16

Week 2, January 16

Seminar: Historiography of the July Crisis, Wartime mobilization, planning (Schlieffen, Plan XVII), military operations on the Western Front

Mario Draper, “‘Are We Ready?’: Belgium and the Entente’s Military Planning for a War Against Germany, 1906-1914, The International History Review, Vol. 41, No. 6, 2019, 1216-1234


Week 3, January 21: The Guns of August

Lecture: Battle of the Frontiers, The Marne, First Ypres, Trench Warfare, the Race to the Sea

Winter, Vol. I, Chapters 2, 8


Elizabeth Greenhalgh, “The French Army on the Western Front” War & Society, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2019, 250-267

Week 3, January 23: Miracle at the Marne

Seminar: Case Study, the Battles of the Frontiers and Marne


[Images of individuals]

Churchill and Fisher, Joseph Gallieni
Week 4, January 28: The Eastern Front

Lecture: Invasion of Serbia, Masurian Lakes, Battle of Warsaw, Conrad von Hotzendorf
Winter, Vol. 1, Chapters 3, 9


Week 4, January 30: Tannenberg and Beyond

Seminar: Case Study, Ludendorff and Hindenburg, Rennenkampf, Samsonov, battle of Tannenberg


The Czar and Grand Duke Nicholas, Aleksei Brusilov
Unit II: Stalemate and Expansion, 1915 - 1916

Week 5, February 4: The Naval War

Lecture: Escape of the Goeben, Battle of Heligoland Bight, Coronel and Falklands Unrestricted Submarine Warfare, Lusitania


Week 5, February 6: Gallipoli

Seminar: Turkey and The Dardanelles campaign, Second Ypres, gas warfare, May crisis, Italy

Winter, Vol. I, chapter 17


Week 6, February 11: The Home Front

Lecture: Zeppelin raids, mass mobilization, the New Armies, blockade

Winter, Vol. I, Chapters 13
Winter, Vol. III, Chapters 4 & 16

Sinking of the Lusitania, Lord Kitchener
Week 6, February 13: Total War and Conscription

Seminar: War against Civilians, Attrition


Week 7, February 18: The Mincing Machine, 1916

Lecture: Falkenhayn, Haig, Joffre, Petain, the Verdun Offensive, the Somme

Winter, Vol. I, Chapter 4


Week 7, February 20, The War at the Margins. RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

Seminar: Arabia, Africa, China, Guerilla Warfare

Winter, Vol. I, Chapter 16 & 18


Unit III: The Breaking of Armies, 1917

Week 8, February 25: The Eastern Front and Russian Revolution

Lecture: Brusilov Offensive, Provisional Government, Lenin, Red October


Week 8, February 27: Jutland


Week 9, March 3: The Tipping Point

Lecture: Nivelle Offensive, Messines, Arras, Hindenburg Line

Winter, Vol. I, Chapter 5


RN Grand Fleet dreadnoughts, Robert Nivelle, Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig
Week 9, March 5: The Crisis of the Naval War

Seminar: Unrestricted Submarine Warfare


Week 10, March 10: Caporetto & Passchendaele

Lecture: Italy, Caporetto, Gotha Raids, Ypres III, The Battle of Cambrai


Week 10, March 12: Civilians at the Front Lines

Seminar: Occupation and Resistance, Neutrality

Winter, Vol. III, chapter 8 & 10

Alex Dowdall, “Civilians in the combat zone: Allied and German evacuation policies at the Western Front, 1914 – 1918” *First World War Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2015, 239-255


Depth Charge Attack, by William Wyllie
Unit IV: Revolution and Victory, 1918

Week 11, March 17: The Supreme Command

Lecture: Foch, David Lloyd George and Haig

Winter, Vol. I, Chapter 6

Chris Kempshall, “Beyond ‘Parade Ground Soldiers’: French Army Assessments of the British in 1918


Week 11, March 19: The Russian Civil War

Seminar: Allied intervention and the Russian Civil War


Week 12, March 24: Genocide

Lecture: Armenia, the collapse of Austria.

Winter, Vol. I, chapter 21, 22


Week 12, March 26: The Final Gamble

Seminar: Brest-Litovsk, Operation Michael, Second Marne.


Week 13, March 31: Road to Victory

Lecture: The 100 days, Pershing and the American Expeditionary Force (AEF)

Winter, Vol. I, chapter 7
Winter, Vol. III, chapter 14


Week 13, April 2: Aftermath

Seminar: Spanish Influenza, War in Turkey, 1919 plans

Winter, Vol. III, Chapter 14


Week 14, April 7: The New Order

Lecture: the Versailles treaty

Winter, vol. III, chapter 21, 22


Week 14, April 9

Seminar: Retrospective on the First World War after the Centenary

Winter, Vol. III, chapter 24
