

The University of Western Ontario
HISTORY 4711F
The First World War: A Revolutionary Experience
Fall/Winter 2021-22
Tuesdays 9:30-11:30AM – Stevenson Hall 1155

Instructor: Jonathan F. Vance

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This is a draft syllabus. Please see your course OWL site for the final syllabus.

Course Description:

This course provides an examination of selected aspects of the First World War, including its origins and aftermath, in a variety of combatant nations. Among the themes to be discussed are the causes of the war, the experience of battle, conflicts on the home front, war culture, social factors, strategic and tactical decision-making, and the memory of the war. Students will have an opportunity to debate the most contentious historiographical issues surrounding the war and use a wide range of primary sources, both in discussions and assignments.

Prerequisite:

2.0 courses in History at the 2200 level or above. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Antirequisite(s):

History 4709E.

Course Syllabus:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- show familiarity with accurate factual information about a wide range of people, groups, events, and documents relating to the First World War, and understand their significance
- demonstrate superior oral and written communication skills
- analyze secondary sources, including their documentary basis, methods, arguments, strengths, limitations, implications, and significance for the field
- spell your name with semaphore flags
- solve research problems by identifying a topic, refining it to a significant and answerable historical question, determining the essential components of the argument, organizing those components in essay form, and drawing conclusions

- appreciate and understand the nature of the First World War in the context of its own time
- grasp the ongoing impact of the First World War in various societies and in various ways

Course Materials:

Students should secure the following texts, which will be used throughout the year:

Hew Strachan, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (any edition)
 George Walter, *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (2006)

Additional readings are available on the course website.

Methods of Evaluation:

Students must complete all coursework. Failure to complete all assigned coursework will result in a failing grade.

Assignments:

Poetry analysis	15%
Film review	30%
Postcard analysis	35%
Seminar presentation and participation	20%

Poetry analysis – due 5 October

Students will write a short analysis, roughly 500 words in length, of a poem from George Walter’s *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (you may not write about a poem that appears on the syllabus for the first four weeks of the course). It should not be a literary analysis, but rather should focus on the poem as an historical document, discussing the author and the context of the work and identifying any terms or proper names that are significant. Although some research beyond the course materials may be required, the assignment is intended to evaluate your writing skills – grading will be based primarily on the clarity of expression. A sample poetry analysis can be found on the course website.

Film review – due 26 October

For this assignment, each student will write a critical review that examines a film from the list below. You should not simply summarize the film, but rather explain its place and significance in the historiography of the First World War. You should also discuss how the film illuminates the history of the events it describes, and what it says about the time it was made. In doing so, you should feel free to consult other critical reviews of the film. The review should be six to eight pages in length, written in proper scholarly format. You will find some notes for the film review on the course website. For further information on the films, including plot summaries, casts, and production details, consult the invaluable Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/>

The African Queen (1951)
All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)
Beneath Hill 60 (2010)
The Big Parade (1925)
The Blue Max (1966)
The Dawn Patrol (1930)
A Fairy Tale (1997)
A Farewell to Arms (1932)

The Fighting 69th (1940)
Flyboys (2006)
Gallipoli (1981)
La Grande Illusion (1937)
Hell’s Angels (1930)
Johnny Got His Gun (1971)
Journey’s End (2017)
Joyeux Noël (2005)

Lawrence of Arabia (1962)
The Lighthorsemen (1987)
The Lost Battalion (2001)
My Boy Jack (2007)
Oh! What A Lovely War (1969)
Regeneration (1997)

Sergeant York (1941)
The Trench (1999)
A Very Long Engagement (2004)
War Horse (2011)
What Price Glory? (1952)
Wings (1927)

Postcard analysis – due 7 December

You will be given an original postcard from the First World War to research and analyze. You should approach it as an exercise in historical detection – how much can the postcard tell you about the time, and about the people and events to which it refers? Your analysis should be at least ten pages in length. Because of the nature of the assignment, it does not need a thesis statement, like a conventional research paper, nor does it need to be presented in prose paragraphs – point form or bulleted sections is acceptable. It should include reference notes and a bibliography. The evaluation will be based largely on the depth and quality of the research – asking the right questions rather than getting all of the answers. A sample analysis can be found on the course website.

Seminar presentation and participation

The success of the seminar depends on the willingness of students to keep up with the readings on a weekly basis and to take part fully in the discussion. Your participation will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Each student will also be required to prepare a brief oral presentation (of no more than 10 minutes – time limits will be enforced) on some aspect of the session’s readings (the specific question to be addressed will be given to you two weeks before your presentation). A schedule of presentations is posted on OWL in the Wiki tab. You should sign up early to secure the subject of your choice.

*** Note: Any late assignment will be subject to a deduction of two marks per day (including weekend days). Assignments submitted more than seven days after the due date will not be graded.

Accommodation for missed assignment deadlines with a Self-Reported Absence:

If a student reports a SRA for an assignment (i.e. an essay) the new due date will be 48 hours after the SRA was submitted. Students should be aware that when they have submitted an SRA for one assignment or test, they are not permitted to write a test or complete an assignment for another course during the period covered by the SRA. Failure to observe this regulation will result in the cancellation of the SRA and the possible application of late penalties.

Seminar Schedule:

7 September – Introduction

14 September – The Road to War

Samuel R. Williamson, ‘The Origins of the War’ [in Strachan book]

Thomas H. Russell, *The World’s Greatest War* (1914), ch. 1

J. William White, *A Primer of the War: Written and Compiled by an American* (1914), ch. 2

21 September – August 1914

Jean-Jacques Becker, “That’s the death knell of our boys ...” in *The French Home Front, 1914-1918*, ed. Patrick Fridensen (1992)

L.M. Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside* (1920), ch. 3 and 4
Erik Ringmar, "'The Spirit of 1914': A Redefinition and a Defence,' *War in History* 25/1 (2018)
Robert Rutherford, 'Canada's August Festival: Communitas, Liminality, and Social Memory,' *Canadian Historical Review* 77 (1996)
Geoffrey Faber, 'The Eve of War' (4)
Isaac Rosenberg, 'On Receiving the First News of the War' (5)
John Masefield, 'August, 1914' (8)
Rupert Brooke, '1914: Peace' (11)
John Freeman, 'Happy is England Now' (12)
Rudyard Kipling, 'For All We Have and Are' (13)

28 September – Atrocities and Propaganda

Paul G. Halpern, 'The War at Sea' [in Strachan book], esp. on unrestricted submarine warfare
John H. Morrow, 'The War in the Air' [in Strachan book], esp. on strategic bombing
John Horne and Alan Kramer, 'German "Atrocities" and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers' Diaries,' *Journal of Modern History* 66/1 (1994)
Edward Thomas, 'This is no case of petty Right or Wrong' (15)
Charles Hamilton Sorley, 'To Germany' (15)
Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce et Decorum est' (141)
Wilfrid Gibson, 'Air-Raid' (185)
Nancy Cunard, 'Zeppelins' (186)

5 October – War as a Gendered Experience?

Gail Braybon, 'Women, War, and Work' **OR** Susan R. Grayzel, 'The Role of Women in the War' [in Strachan book]
Leo van Bergen and Catharina Bakker, 'Dutch Nurses and the Great War: On Caregiving and Gender,' *First World War Studies* 11/2 (2020): 107–22
Jessie Pope, 'War Girls' (169)
Jessie Pope, 'Socks' (189)
Theresa Hooley, 'A War Film' (190)
Vera Brittain, 'The Superfluous Woman' (255)
May Wedderburn Cannan, 'Lamplight' (261)
poetry analysis due

12 October – Trench Culture and Morale

Jane Chapman and Ross Wilson, 'Illustrating War-time: Cartoons and the British and Dominion Soldier Experience during the Great War, 1914–1918,' *War in History* 26 (2019)
Edward Madigan, "'Sticking to a hateful task": Resilience, Humour, and British Understandings of Combatant Courage,' *War in History* 20 (2013)
Robert L. Nelson, 'Soldier Newspapers: A Useful Source in the Social and Cultural History of the First World War and Beyond,' *War in History* 17 (2010)

19 October – Mutiny, Desertion, and Disobedience

David Englander, 'Mutinies and Military Morale' **OR** Alexander Watson, 'Mutinies and Military Morale' [in Strachan book]

Rudyard Kipling, 'Epitaphs: The Coward' (162)
Gilbert Frankau, 'The Deserter' (163)
Ivor Gurney, 'Portrait of a Coward' (206)
film review due

26 October – The Court Martial of Private George West Arnold

2 November – Reading week – no seminar

9 November – The First WORLD War?

David Killingray, 'The War in Africa' [in Strachan book]

Dan Bullard, "'Loyal until Death": Memories of African Great War Service for Germany,' in Kellen Kurschinski et al, *The Great War: From Memory to History* (2015)

Joe Lunn, 'The Great War and Senegalese Memory: The Veterans' Legacy,' *First World War Studies* 10 (2019)

Michelle Moyd, 'Centring a Sideshow: Local Experiences of the First World War in Africa,' *First World War Studies* (2016): 111-30

16 November – Selling the War to Americans

David Trask, 'The Entry of the USA into the War and its Effects' [in Strachan book]

Robert Lansing and Louis F. Post, *A War of Self-Defense*

Andrew C. McLaughlin, *The Great War: From Spectator to Participant*

John S.P. Tatlock, *Why America Fights Germany*

Woodrow Wilson, 'Peace Without Victory,' 22 January 1917

Woodrow Wilson's speech to Congress on the Declaration of War, 2 April 1917

Woodrow Wilson, 'Fourteen Points,' 8 January 1918

23 November – Russia

John Horne, 'Socialism, Peace, and Revolution, 1917-1918' [in Strachan book]

Corinne Gaudin, 'Rural Echoes of World War I: War Talk in the Russian Village' *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56 (2008): 391-414

Igor V. Narskii, 'The Frontline Experience of Russian Soldiers in 1914-1916,' *Russian Studies in History* 51 (2013): 31-49

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, 3 March 1918

30 November – War Memorials

Gwenllian M. Awbery, 'The Language of Remembrance: Welsh and English on First World War War Memorials,' *Folk Life* 55/2 (2017): 112-36

R.J. Wilson, 'Remembering and Forgetting the Great War in New York City,' *First World War Studies* 3/1 (2012): 87-106

Ivor Gurney, 'Butchers and Tombs' (152)

Laurence Binyon, 'For the Fallen' (235)

Charlotte Mew, 'The Cenotaph' (237)

Siegfried Sassoon, 'Memorial Tablet (Great War)' (244)

Rudyard Kipling, 'Epitaph: Common Form' (245)

Siegfried Sassoon, 'On Passing the New Menin Gate' (247)

7 December – War Literature

Modris Eksteins, 'The Memory of the War' [in Strachan book]

Charles Yale Harrison, *Generals Die in Bed* (1930)

Jonathan F. Vance, 'The Soldier as Novelist: Literature, History and the Great War,' *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review* 179 (2003)

Ivor Gurney, 'War Books' (265)

postcard analysis due

Additional Statements:

Please review the Department of History Course Must-Knows document,

<https://www.history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/Docs/Department%20of%20History%20Course%20Must-Knows.pdf>,

for additional information regarding:

- Academic Offences
- Accessibility Options
- Medical Issues
- Plagiarism
- Scholastic Offences
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