

History 415
World War I
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Office Hours: T and Th 11-12am or by appointment

1) Introduction:

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, scholars are beginning to reassess their ideas. Once dominant images of a senseless war fought with pointless tactics by idiotic generals have yielded to a view of the war as an astonishingly complex series of events that impacted the entire world. This course will study the war in all of its complexity. We will not be looking for simple answers nor will we merely see the First World War as a protracted dress rehearsal for the Second World War. Instead, we will seek to understand why the world went to war in 1914 and why citizens of the most “civilized” nations on earth killed one another at unprecedented rates for four years. I hope that by the end of this course you will share some of my interest in and endless fascination with the “war to end all wars.”

2) Books:

John Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

Michael Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Andrew Wiest, *Haig: The Evolution of a Commander* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2005).

3) Recommended Web Sites:

<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/>

<http://members.aol.com/TeacherNet/WWI.html>

<http://www.worldwar1.com>

<http://www.history.sfasu.edu/BaylorExhibit.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/index.shtml>

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/games/western_front/index.shtml

<http://www.1914-1918.net/>

<http://www.gwpda.org>

For a basic timeline:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/rotogravures/rototime1.html>

For good maps:

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlas/atlas%20home.htm>

<http://www.westernfront.co.uk/thegreatwar/maproom.php>

For footnoting your papers:

<http://citationmachine.net/index.php?callstyle=11&all=>

4) Schedule of classes:

Please note that this schedule is subject to change.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
20 Aug	Introduction and causes	
25 Aug	1914 in the West	Neiberg, chapter 1
27 Aug	1914 in the East	Neiberg, chapter 2
1 Sept	Stalemate	Neiberg, chapter 3
3 Sept	Trench warfare	Ellis, chapters 1 and 2
8 Sept	No Class	
10 Sept	War in Africa	Neiberg, pp. 298-305
15 Sept	Gallipoli I	Neiberg, pp. 95-111
17 Sept	Gallipoli II	Neiberg, pp. 111-122
22 Sept	War in the East, 1915	Neiberg, pp. 111-139
24 Sept	War in the Middle East	Neiberg, pp. 140-149
29 Sept	Home Fronts	None
1 Oct	Italy and the Isonzo	Neiberg, pp. 150-158
6 Oct	Verdun	Neiberg, pp. 158-172
13 Oct	Culture and World War I	None
15 Oct	War in the Air	Neiberg, pp. 172-176
20 Oct	The Brusilov Offensive	Neiberg, pp. 182-188
22 Oct	MIDTERM EXAM	
27 Oct	The Somme	Neiberg, 188-202; Wiest, first half
29 Oct	The Russian Revolution	Neiberg, chapter 8
3 Nov	Mutiny	Neiberg, chapter 9
5 Nov	Third Ypres	Neiberg, pp. 254-275; finish Wiest

10 Nov	The Ludendorff Offensives	Neiberg, pp. 306-323
12 Nov	The Americans Arrive	Neiberg, pp. 323-330
17 Nov	Writing Better Papers	TBA
19 Nov	FINAL PAPER DUE. NO CLASS	
24 Nov	Armistice and Victory	Neiberg, pp. 331-356
1 Dec	Peace	Finish Neiberg
3 Dec	Legacies	TBA

5) Assignments:

Midterm exam (20%): 6 March
 Paper Prospectus (20%): 25 March
 Paper (25%): 17 April
 Comprehensive Final Exam (35%): TBA

Paper: The paper should be roughly 2,500 to 3,500 words, exclusive of footnotes, bibliography, etc. You should feel free to write on any aspect of the war that interests you. You can write on military aspects if you wish, but art, culture, gender relations, music, and literature are all perfectly acceptable.

6) Ten Tips for Better Writing:

1. Buy and read William Strunk and E. B. White's The Elements of Style. It remains the best short and cheap book on how to improve your writing.
2. Make sure that you know how every word, every sentence, and every paragraph of your paper supports your main ideas.
3. Make the paragraph your primary unit of composition. Focus each paragraph on one main idea connected to your larger thesis.
4. Write in the active voice as often as possible. Example: "Islamic terrorists attacked the World Trade Center" instead of "The World Trade Center was attacked." The second sentence leaves the actor vague. Writing in the active voice forces you to make critical choices in your writing.
5. Be specific in your language. Avoid weak or useless words like "very" and "thing."
6. Omit unnecessary words.
7. Use the positive form as often as possible. Example: "He was often late" instead of "He did not often show up on time."

8. When discussing events that occurred in the past, use the past tense. Example: “The Americans entered World War I in 1917” instead of “The Americans would enter World War I in 1917.”
9. Write with nouns and verbs as the basis of your sentences. Adjectives and adverbs support nouns and verbs, not vice versa.
10. Revise and rewrite! Do not be content with your first (or even your second) draft.

7) Writing a Prospectus:

1. Research question (25 points). What question will your paper seek to answer? What do you want to explore? Good research questions often deal with the four “C’s” of history: comparison, change over time, continuity, and context.

Good sample research questions:

- Which society made more efficient use of its armed forces in World War I, France or Great Britain? (comparative)
- How did the war change the role of women in European society? (change over time)
- What elements of Germany’s war effort in World War I affected its preparations for World War II? (continuity)
- How did pre-war changes in French culture affect the ways that French soldiers understood their war experience? (context)

Bad sample questions:

- Wasn’t George Patton a cool general?
- Which was the better artillery piece, the French 75mm or the German 88mm?
- What did women do in World War I?

2. Thesis (25 points). What do you propose as the hypothesis and argumentative thread of this paper? A thesis is not set in stone. It can (and should) evolve as your research and your thinking evolves, but at this stage you should have some idea of what you will argue. Your thesis should be as specific as possible.

Good sample thesis statements:

- Great Britain’s local pattern of recruiting in World War I led to increased unit cohesion.
- Successful French generals in World War I learned to abandon their faith in the infantry offensive and developed a doctrine of war based around attrition and artillery.
- Nazi ideology prevented German industry from employing women in war-related work to the same extent as in the United States, Russia, and England.

Bad thesis statements:

- George Patton was really cool.
- Americans are better soldiers than Britons.
- Because of airplanes, America won World War I.

3. Evidence (25 points). Identify three books and two scholarly articles that address a similar research question in whole or in part. Then identify what they say about your topic. If they disagree, why? How can the sources help you build your argument?
4. Rough outline (25 points). List three potential topic sentences for your paper. Be sure that they relate to your evidence and to your thesis.

Sample Prospectus

1. Research question: **How did World War I change the racial climate in the United States?**
2. Thesis: **World War I temporarily reduced racism at home because of the common interest in winning the war, but it created the conditions for racism to emerge even more strongly in the 1920s.**
3. Evidence (one example, you'll need five): **David Kennedy, Over Here: The First World War and American Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) argues that most African-Americans supported the war in the hopes of gaining racial equality after the war was over. When these hopes proved forlorn, African-Americans grew even more disenchanted with American society. Other African-Americans supported the war out of fear of being branded unpatriotic. The racism of the war years and immediate post-war years only confirmed to such thinkers their belief that America was not yet ready for racial equality. In either case, the war did not demonstrate an improving racial climate. This source will help me establish the attitudes of African-Americans toward America and the war in 1917.**
4. Rough outline:
 - a. **Prior to World War I, racism pervaded both the American military and American society more generally.**
 - b. **Thousands of African-Americans moved north during the war years in hopes of finding better jobs and more welcoming communities, but conditions in the north were often little better than those in the south.**
 - c. **After the war, thousands of veterans returned to the United States expecting to get their jobs back, even if that meant firing the African-Americans already in those jobs.**

8) A Military Order of Battle:

The sizes and terms of military units change over time. In peacetime, units tend to be much smaller. What follows is a typical World War I order of battle from smallest to largest:

Squad: 8-11 men commanded by a sergeant
Platoon: 30-50 men commanded by a lieutenant
Company: 100-200 men commanded by a captain or major
Battalion: 600-1,000 men commanded by a lt. colonel
Regiment: 2,000-3,000 men commanded by a colonel
Brigade: 4,000-5,000 men commanded by a brigadier (one-star) general
Division: 12,000-20,000 men commanded by a major (two-star) general
Corps: two or more divisions commanded by a lieutenant (three-star) general
Army: two or more corps commanded by a (four-star) general
Army group: two or more armies commanded by a five-star general or field marshal

Battalions usually formed the basic tactical unit of an army, regiments the basic social units of an army, and divisions the basic administrative units of an army.

9) Notes:

I do expect you to come to class, in large part because I have no intention of using my lectures simply to replicate the readings. I expect you to take notes, be prepared to answer any questions I might pose, and to ask questions if something is unclear. Please turn off all pagers and cell phones in class and have the courtesy to come to class on time. Be prepared to accept serious deductions in grades for work turned in late and be prepared to give me an electronic version of your written work if I ask you for it. I will be available for office hours, but if these hours are not convenient for you, please email me or see me after class to arrange another appointment. Please also let me know if there are any special circumstances that will require you to be absent or late.

Academic Dishonesty: Scholastic dishonesty will not be condoned under any circumstance. See the current Undergraduate Bulletin for a good definition of such behavior. Cheating on an exam or demonstrated plagiarism on a paper will automatically lead to a grade of "F" for the course and can result in dismissal from the college. The instructor reserves the right to use electronic resources, such as turnitin.com, to detect plagiarism. If you have questions or concerns about this policy—please see the instructor during office hours.

Students with Disabilities: If a student has a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities Covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies. Mailing address: 118 College Drive # 8586, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001; Telephone: (601) 266-5024; TTY: (601) 266-6837; Fax: (601) 266-6035 or at:
<http://www.ids.usm.edu/ODA/default.asp>