

HRNS 308: The Great War
Sweet Briar College
Spring 2009

Tuesday, Thursday 1:15-2:30
Room: Benedict 101

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World War I is often seen as the traumatic birth of the 20th century, a watershed dividing the "stability" of the pre-war world from the insecurity of the post-war period. The causes, interpretations, and results of the war are still hotly debated in the academic literature. This seminar will examine the war itself and its contested understandings from both a historiographic and theoretical perspective.

Required Texts:

- Chickering, Roger, and Stig Förster, eds. *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918*. Publications of the German Historical Institute. Washington, D.C: German Historical Institute, 2000.
- Copeland, Dale C. *The Origins of Major War*. Cornell studies in security affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999.
- Goemans, H. E. *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War*. Princeton studies in international history and politics. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Neiberg, Michael S. *Fighting the Great War: A Global History*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Snyder, Jack L. *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*. Cornell studies in security affairs. Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Strachen, Hew. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*. Oxford, U.K.: New York, 2000.
- Herwig, Holger H, ed. *The Outbreak of World War I: Causes and Responsibilities*. 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997.
- Van Evera, Stephen. *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*. Cornell studies in security affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Additional readings are assigned and are marked by a double asterisk (**). These readings are available on the GOVT 332 Moodle page. Readings marked with a single asterisk (*) signify readings in the Chickering and Förster volume.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation (20% of final grade). Assessed by two criteria:

a. Attendance and active participation. This necessitates a careful and close reading of the arguments offered in each work. **It is imperative that you stay on top of the material covered in class. If, for any reason, you find yourself in a position where you cannot attend class, please contact your professors immediately.**

b. Theory Journals: All students are required to keep a record of the readings in a composition book. These will consist of a schematic diagram of the basic argument for the readings of the day that includes the causal factor(s) (independent variable), the result (dependent variable) and any intervening variables (factors that mediate the effect of the independent on the dependent variable). In short, you will diagram what the author is trying to explain and how she/he actually explains it. For example, a simple “arrow diagram” for an argument can look like this: $A \rightarrow B$. This is read as, “A causes B.” In this case, A is the “independent variable” and B is the “dependent variable.” Remember, A and B are both *variables*. This means that the absence of A will lead to the absence of B. A more complex causal chain is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{c} B \rightarrow C \rightarrow E \\ + \\ D \rightarrow F \end{array}$$

You can read this causal chain as: B causes C, C without D causes E, C with D causes F. In this case, C and D are “intervening variables”—they intervene in the causal process that begins with B, or the independent variable. Your entry will also include a brief description of the argument (i.e., you should translate your diagrams into standard English), and a statement as to whether you think the evidence provided supports the causal argument made.

Journals will be spot checked throughout the semester. Your grade will reflect whether you are keeping the journal up to date rather than whether your particular interpretation is accurate. Nonetheless, we expect that you will make corrections to your diagrams and descriptions based on class discussions.

2. Mid Term Essay (30% of final grade)

The essay prompt will be distributed on Thursday, February 19 and will be due **Thursday, February 26.**

3. Analytical research paper (50% of final grade)

Students should begin thinking about potential paper topics pertaining to particular aspects of World War I immediately. Please consult with the professors about your topic and potential thesis early and often. Papers are due **Thursday, May 7.** More details will be forthcoming shortly.

It is expected that student will be actively involved in all aspects of this course. This includes keeping current on all readings, the theory journal, ACTIVE and PROACTIVE discussion, and submitting complete, well-researched, and well-written exams and term papers.

Since this course is meant to give each student a graduate school experience, LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY REASON! Graduate school encourages preparedness and early work. Professors of graduate students expect those in their courses to act responsibly as an adult, which includes accepting the consequences for missed deadlines. You are the best of your cohort ... act like it. ON TIME, PREPARED, SUPERIOR WORK should be your motto for the course.

Grading criteria:

“A” denotes excellent command of readings and lectures, incisive analytical faculty, as well as mature and independent judgment.

“B” denotes good command of readings and lectures, good analytical faculty and good judgment. (Note that a “B” is a good grade for the instructor.)

“C” denotes significant deficiencies in at least one of the criteria (i.e., readings, lectures, analysis and judgment).

“D” and “F” denote significant deficiencies in more than one of these criteria.

1/22: Introduction and one theoretical perspective (A)

Neiberg, 1-10

Herwig, 1-11, 15-41, 48-55, 57-98, 105-112

Oxford, 1-25

1/27 Civil-military relations and dysfunctional strategic decision making, I (B)

Snyder, 15-106

1/29 Civil-military relations and dysfunctional strategic decision making, II (B)

Snyder, 107-216

2/3 Offensive-Defensive theory and the origins of war, I (B)

**Lieber, Keir A. *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics Over Technology*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005), 26-45.

Van Evera, 35-104

2/5 Offensive-Defensive theory and the origins of war, II (B)

Van Evera, 117-239

2/10 New History, New Theories, I (B)

**Lieber, 46-98

**Snyder, Jack, and Keir A. Lieber. "Defensive Realism and the "New" History of World War I." *International Security* 33, no. 1 (July 1, 2008), pp. 174-194

2/12 New History, New Theories, II (B)

Copeland, 35-117

2/17 Questioning long held "myths" of the war, I (A)

Herwig, 125-51

Ferguson, 1-55, 82-104

2/19 Questioning long held "myths" of the war, II (A)

Ferguson, 282-338, 433-62

Essay prompt submitted

2/24 No class scheduled—dedicated to essay

2/26 The German invasion of France and the Stalemate on the Western Front (B)

Neiberg, 11-37, 67-94

Essay due

3/3 The Eastern Front, 1914-5 and the war of maneuver (A)

Neiberg, 38-66

Oxford, 39-53

3/5 Entente vs. Central Powers strategies 1914-7 (A)

Oxford, 26-38, 54-65

3/10 Life on the battlefield (B)

**Keegan, John, *The Face of Battle*, (New York: Viking Press, 1976), pp. 207-89

Showalter, 73-94 *

3/12 Reactions to trench warfare and the air war (or) the war of the poor vs. the war of the privileged (A)

Ferguson, 339-65

Muller, 95-112 *

Oxford, 191-203, 265-277

**Lewis, Jon, ed. *The Mammoth Book of Eyewitness World War I*. Running Press, 2003.
(O'Callaghan), 36-7, (Read), 37-8, (Richards and Delius), 45-50, (von Wiegand),
56-7, (Bell and Richards), 58-62, (Various), 62-65, (Hamilton), 66-73, (Various),
77-84, (Graves), 91-2, (Clapham), 107-8, (Graves), 117-8, (Kokoschka and
Liebknecht), 123-5, (Various), 133-46

3/17-3/19: No class—spring break

3/24 The Eastern Front to the Bolshevik Revolution (A)

Neiberg, 111-7, 203-22
Oxford, 179-182

3/26 The Balkans and the Turkish fronts (A)

Neiberg, 95-111, 117-22
Oxford, 66-91

3/31 Noncombatants in war and the politics of the homefront (A)

Horne and Kramer, 153-69 *
Herwig, 42-47, 113-7
Oxford, 163-78, 204-226

4/2 Societies and economies at war (A)

Offer, 169-88 *
Geinitz, 227-46 *
Oxford, 119-62
Bessel, 437-52 *

4/7 Socialism, the Bolshevik Revolution (A)

Neiberg, 222-8
Oxford, 227-238

4/9 The Somme, Verdun, and the Western Front through early 1917 (A)

Neiberg, 123-202
Oxford, 182-88

4/14 The war at sea and America's entry into the war (B)

Neiberg, 229-53, 280-96
Oxford, 104-18, 239-52
Herwig, 189-206 *

4/16 Passchendaele (Third Ypres) and German victories (B)

Neiberg, 254-79, 306-30
Oxford, 188-190, 253-64

4/21 The Allies victorious (B)

Neiberg, 331-56
Oxford, 278-90

4/23 The armistice and Versailles (A)

Neiberg, 357-64
Oxford, 291-304
**Lewis (Nicolson), 484-7
**Keylor, William R, ed. *The Legacy of the Great War: Peacemaking, 1919*. Boston:
Houghton Mifflin, 1998. 17-46, 56-61, 119-38, 169-86

4/28 Regime type and gambles for resurrection, I (B)
Goemans, 3-52, 72-180

4/30 Regime type and gambles for resurrection, II (B)
Goemans, 232-309

5/5 The legacies and (unlearned) lessons of WWI (B)
Ferguson, 395-432
Herwig, 119-24, 153-9
Oxford, 305-18