

# World War I

History 428/528  
Spring 2016, CRN 36057/36058  
Tuesday/Thursday – 12:00-1:20; Lillis 185

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Office hours: Thurs. 2-3:30; Friday 10-12; or by appointment

I wish to emphasize **by appointment**. I am on campus and available nearly every day (though less so on Monday and Wednesday afternoons when I have a class scheduled). If you want to meet, get in contact with me.

## Subject of the course

This course is a general survey of World War I. We will begin with the origins and causes of the war. We will continue with an examination of the trajectory of the war, both with respect to military operations and to the political, economic, and social dynamics produced by the war and the pressures waging war placed on all the belligerent states. Along the way we will look at how the war was experienced by those who participated in it, both as soldiers and civilians. And we will conclude not only with the peace settlement but the broader repercussions and consequences of the war on Europe and the global balance of power more generally.

World War I continues to be a matter of intense public interest. It is a subject that sells books and attracts documentary filmmakers. It is also a topic that invites controversy. We will thus examine some recent "public" or "popular" histories of the war and test the claims made in those accounts against recent scholarship: where are common perceptions "right"? Where are they "wrong" or perhaps dated in their arguments and conclusions?

## Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Gain a familiarity with the basic outline of the history of World War I and the major themes and issues of recent scholarship on the war.
2. Identify and assess the complex set of factors that explain the trajectory and outcomes of the war and in particular the interrelationship between the domestic political, international, military dimensions of the war.
3. Assess the claims of recent popular accounts of World War I against the existing scholarship.

4. Practice the methods of historical research, the identification of appropriate historical scholarship, and the assessment of that scholarship.

### **Estimated student workload**

Class attendance is expected. We will be reading two books and I do expect you to read them. You will also be expected to conduct independent research for the midterm, final and research paper. You should expect about 80 pages of assigned reading per week (though you will find that the larger of our two books is *extremely* engaging and readable). You expect to have to read the same for the purposes of independent research. The total writing for the class is likely to be in the range of 30 pages for the term (six-eight total pages for the short assignments; eight for the midterm and final exams; and six-seven pages for the research paper).

The two assigned books (available in the Duckstore) are:

Hew Strachan, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War, 2nd edition, 2016. (This book is hot off the presses and is scheduled to arrive at the end of the first week of the term, so do not be alarmed if it is not there on the first day.)

Peter England, The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War, 2011.

### **How Grades will be determined**

Short assignments best five of six	25%
On-line midterm (May 3)	25%
Research paper (May 31, in class)	25%
On-line final exam (June 7, 11:00 pm)	25%

Class attendance is expected but as an additional incentive we will have six "short assignments" on reading assignments. I will hand out the topic on the day before the class the assignment is due. You will submit them, typed, in class.

The on-line midterm and final exam will follow similar formats. They will each involve two or three essays, the topics of which will be announced about a week in advance. They will be submitted on-line as "assignments" and the instructions and place of submission will be found under "assignments" on the course Canvas site. **For the purposes of the midterm and final you will choose a single belligerent state to be "your" country of expertise** (if you want to select a non-belligerent or something that doesn't fit the definition of a "state," we should talk). At least one question on the midterm and final will ask you to address the country of your expertise (e.g., economic mobilization in whichever country you select).

As indicated above, the "research paper" will ask you to test an argument presented in a recent "public" history of World War I (radio program, documentary, etc.) against current scholarship: Is the argument made accurate? Does it reflect current scholarship? If you were to modify the program, what would you change in light of your research?

All written work will be assigned grades following the guidelines established by the Department of History. You can find those guidelines here:  
<http://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/>

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

A = 93% and up

A- = 90-92.9%

B+ = 87-89.9%

B = 83-86.9%

And on down the scale to 60% = D-

Anything below a 60% is an F.

A+ are awarded on a discretionary basis. I typically award 1-3% of any class an A+ but only when there are clear cases of students who consistently outperform their peers throughout the duration of the term.

## Course Policies

Class attendance is expected and the quizzes and exams will reflect that expectation. If you are in class, I expect you to avoid the use of any devices or engaging in behavior that might distract your fellow students.

I encourage everyone in the class to collaborate - to talk with classmates about the quizzes, the midterm, and the final. You will benefit from sharing ideas and talking with others about the coursework.

>>>> **However, all submitted written work must be your own:** you may share ideas but in the end you must write it up yourself. Doing otherwise - whether "borrowing" a colleague's written work or submitting something written by a third party - constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarized work will receive a zero in the first instance. A second instance of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the class and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

For information regarding the research paper, the conduct of research, appropriate research materials, the formatting of papers, and proper reference methods for research papers, see the course Canvas under the "Research Paper" module.

**Class schedule: the readings are listed for the days on which we will discuss them**

**Week 1**

March 29: Introduction: Why World War I? And a look at how the war began.

Read: Englund, The Beauty and the Sorrow, beginning through page 16; and Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, "Introduction" (I've placed a pdf version of the first edition introduction on the course Canvas site)

March 31: Origins and causes

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, ch. 1 (a pdf version has been posted to the course Canvas site); and a selection of documents from primary source collections (on Canvas)

**Week 2**

April 5: How to win the war: the strategy of the Central and Entente powers

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 2-4

April 7: The view from the ground

Read: Englund, The Beauty and the Sorrow, 17-72 (or as far as you can get!)

**Week 3**

April 12: Other fronts

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 5-7

April 14: 1915

Read: Englund, The Beauty and the Sorrow, to page 200

#### **Week 4**

April 19: The war at sea and at air

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 8, and 20

April 21: The economic war

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 9-10

#### **Week 5**

April 26: Home fronts

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 11-12

April 28: 1916

Read: Englund, The Beauty and the Sorrow, to page 314

#### **Week 6**

May 3: Eastern and Western Fronts, 1916-1917

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 13

**>>>>>> ON-LINE MIDTERM DUE: May 3, 11:00 pm**

May 5: Mutinies and morale

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 14

#### **Week 7**

May 10: Responding to the crisis

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 15-16

May: 12: Changes in the political situation

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 17-18

### **Week 8**

May 17: It was a very bad year

Read: Englund, The Beauty and the Sorrow, to page 419

May 19: German victories, Allied victories

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, chs. 19 and 21

### **Week 9**

May 24: 1918

Read: Englund, The Beauty and the Sorrow, to page 508

May 26: The Peace Settlement

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, ch. 22

### **Week 10**

May 31: The legacy of the war I

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, ch. 23

**>>>> Research papers due (in class)**

June 2: The legacy of the war II

Read: Strachan, Oxford Illustrated, ch. 24

**June 7: On-line final exam due, 11:00 pm**