

World War I

History 349 / Fall 2025

This is a course about war and revolution: the destruction of an entire system of culture, power, and economy during four and one-quarter years of relentless slaughter. We will learn about events on the battlefield from 1914-18, of course, but the main goal is to consider the war's meaning for the many millions of participants on five continents. More broadly, our discussion sections will provide an opportunity to consider how historical interpretation works, using case studies from wartime controversies. It's going to be a busy semester!

Course Components

Lectures will convene on Mondays and Wednesdays in xxxxxxx. Attendance is expected! (See below for more information on attendance policies.)

Students will also meet in mandatory discussion sections on Fridays (with certain exceptions noted on the syllabus). The purpose of these sections is to allow an in-depth conversation about historical interpretation in a smaller setting. You will be expected to read the assigned articles in time for section!

Learning Outcomes

This course aligns with the University Core Curriculum, which includes the following Foundational Learning Outcomes for Humanities (HUM) courses (FLOs 1-3 and 6):

- Recognize and describe humanistic, historical, or artistic works or problems and patterns of the human experience.
- Apply disciplinary methodologies, epistemologies, and traditions of the humanities and the arts.
- Analyze and evaluate texts, works, objects, events, or ideas in their cultural, intellectual, or historical contexts.
- Analyze diverse narratives and evidence in order to explore the complexity of human experience across space and time

More specifically, completion of HIST 349 will enhance your ability to:

- Identify key events, figures, and themes in the history of World War I, and their broader significance to world-historical developments in the 20th Century
- Interpret exemplary works of historical scholarship, discerning methodology and argumentation
- Analyze historical sources along with works of literature and culture deriving from these years of bloody struggle
- Write original essays in response to complex prompts encouraging you to synthesize course material reflecting the wide range of human experiences during World War I

Grading Breakdown

20% = midterm exam. This blue-book exam will take place during our regular class period on October 10.

25% = five-page formal essay, based on your reading of the England book; due November 21.

30% = final exam. Once again, this will be a blue-book exam asking you to synthesize interpretations from the course material. December, date TBA.

15% = a total of seven or eight in-class quizzes covering material from the course textbook and lectures.

10% = participation in discussion sections.

Course Policies

Attendance is required. Over the course of the semester, you may accumulate six (yes, six!) unexcused absences without penalty. Of those six, you may only miss two discussion sessions. It is not our job to “approve” absences one way or another, but if you expect to be representing the university repeatedly in an official capacity (sports, band, etc.), please do discuss this with me early on this semester.

Common courtesy suggests that you should arrive on time. A lecture is not the same thing as a television viewing! Your coming and going may represent a significant distraction.

Contemporary students are tempted by all kinds of electronic distractions that inhibit their ability to learn effectively in class. I am going to ask that you refrain from using any electronic devices during class: no laptops, no tablets, and no phones will be permitted during lecture or discussion sections. This is your opportunity to perfect the art of note-taking by hand!

Academic integrity: The assignments in this course require you to formulate complex thoughts in your own words. Attempts to pass off another’s words as your own – be it on an exam or in your written work – will carry harsh penalties. Plagiarized papers will earn a “zero” for the assignment and may lead to further consequences. Use of AI is only permitted in certain contexts, to be discussed in connection with the paper assignment.

Disclaimer: In the event of a major campus emergency or weather disaster, the above requirements, deadlines and grading policies are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email or phone.

Required Book Purchases

Peter England, *The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2012), paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0-307-73928-5.

Lawrence Sondhaus, *World War One: The Global Revolution*, 2nd ed., paperback (Cambridge University Press, 2020). ISBN-13: 978-1-108-79163-2.

Contact Information

Professor William Gray (wggray@purdue.edu)

TA

Office hours in xxxxxx:

xxxxxxxxxxx

(or by appointment)

Course Schedule: Lectures, Readings, and Sections

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| PART I. EMPIRE AND BELONGING | | |
| Aug 25 | Introduction | |
| Aug 27 | European empires as the global core | |
| Aug 29 | Arms races and portents of war | Sondhaus, 1-32 |
| | | |
| Sept 1 | LABOR DAY | |
| Sept 3 | The outbreak of war | Sondhaus, 34-56 |
| Sept 5 | SECTION: Mobilization for the front | Sondhaus, 149-59 Brightspace |
| | | |
| PART II. COMBAT AND RADICALIZATION | | |
| Sept 8 | The Western Front: Atrocities in Belgium | Sondhaus, 58-74 |
| Sept 10 | The Western Front: The Marne & Ypres | |
| Sept 12 | SECTION: War propaganda | Brightspace |
| | | |
| Sept 15 | The Eastern Front: Russian advances | Sondhaus, 74-88 |
| Sept 17 | The "Christmas Truce" | |
| Sept 19 | SECTION: Poison gas & the Lusitania | Brightspace |
| | | |
| Sept 22 | Gallipoli | Sondhaus, 115-36 |
| Sept 24 | Southeastern Fronts: Italy and Serbia | Sondhaus, 136-46 |
| Sept 26 | NO CLASS | |
| | | |
| Sept 29 | The Armenian Genocide | Sondhaus, 341-48 |
| Oct 1 | Falkenhayn's Gamble | Sondhaus, 179-84 |
| Oct 3 | SECTION: Verdun | Brightspace |
| | | |
| Oct 6 | The Somme | Sondhaus, 184-207 |
| Oct 8 | War at sea | Sondhaus, 209-18 |
| Oct 10 | MIDTERM EXAM | |
| | | |
| PART III. TRANSFORMATIONS | | |
| Oct 13 | FALL BREAK | |
| Oct 15 | War over culture | Sondhaus, 159-66 |
| Oct 17 | SECTION: art and war | Brightspace |
| | | |
| Oct 20 | Labor & production | Sondhaus, 166-77 |
| Oct 22 | "Broken faces": the wounded | |
| Oct 24 | SECTION: women & the war | Englund |
| | | |
| Oct 27 | Financing war | |
| Oct 29 | The hunger winter | Sondhaus, 285-97 |
| Oct 31 | SECTION: Germany's submarine gamble | Sondhaus, 218-33 Brightspace |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| PART IV. REVOLUTIONS | | |
| Nov 3 | East Asia transformed | Sondhaus, 91-102 |
| Nov 5 | Africa trampled | Sondhaus, 102-13 |
| Nov 7 | SECTION: war on the “periphery” | Brightspace |
| | | |
| Nov 10 | The end of the Ottoman Empire | Sondhaus, 321-40 |
| Nov 12 | The end of the Russian Empire | Sondhaus, 246-61 |
| Nov 14 | SECTION: Lenin and the War | Brightspace |
| | | |
| Nov 17 | France’s close call | Sondhaus, 300-7 |
| Nov 19 | Germany’s “peace resolution” | Sondhaus, 297-300 |
| Nov 21 | America enters the war | Sondhaus, 235-46, 307-18 |
| | | |
| Nov 24 | The United States on the Western Front | |
| | | |
| PART V. PEACE AND MEMORY | | |
| Dec 1 | German peace: victory in the East | Sondhaus, 363-66 |
| Dec 3 | American peace: victory in the West | Sondhaus, 349-62, 366-81 |
| Dec 5 | SECTION: Wilson’s vision | Brightspace |
| | | |
| Dec 8 | French peace: victory at Versailles | Sondhaus, 383-407 |
| Dec 10 | War and memory I | Sondhaus, 409-41 |
| Dec 12 | War and memory II | |