

LIBA 497/LBST 590
The First World War: Defining the Twentieth Century
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Course Outline

Many historians have argued that the First World War defined the twentieth century, that it destroyed the Old Victorian Order of the nineteenth century and ushered in the blood-soaked century of death and destruction. But what was the war about and did it really define the twentieth century? That is the question the class will explore.

Course goals

This course is designed to develop an understanding the war through the study of the history, literature, and art of the conflict, its prelude, and its aftermath.

Topics to be covered

The class will cover many topics about the war. We will study its effect on international relations, domestic politics, and military science. But we will also look at works of literature and films inspired by the war to gain a fuller understanding its impact on the collective psyche of mankind.

Required Texts

The class will read a variety of texts, both historical and literary. Hew Strachan, The First World War is a survey of the war. Regeneration by Pat Parker is a story about men treated for shellshock during the war. The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry edited by George Walker, explores the dark and bitter poetry of such combatants as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front is a classic fictional study of the war by an eyewitness. The novel shows how a young German student joins the army with great enthusiasm for the war, but soon becomes disillusioned. Two memoirs by soldiers that fought in the war, Storm of Steel by Ernst Jünger and Goodbye to All That by Robert Graves, will also be studied.

All the books have been chosen with the view of fulfilling the course goal of imparting a deeper understanding of the war and its effects. The survey will present the war in the form of an interpretation of the evidence, while the fiction works impart a sort of psychological truth many times not attainable in nonfiction works.

The class will also watch the following films: Behind the Lines, and La Grande Illusion. Behind the Lines is based on the novel Regeneration. La Grande Illusion shows the interaction of three Frenchmen from different social classes during the war. The films have been chosen to give the student an appreciation of how the war has been depicted in the decades after its close. BBC and PBS documentaries on the First World War will also be shown.

Assignments and Requirements

1. Note cards: For each reading assignment students must take notes that fill up both sides of a 5 by 8 inch note card.
2. Term paper proposal: thesis statement, outline, and preliminary bibliography (Proposals must be turned in by the due date to receive any credit.)
3. A ten-page double-spaced term paper (graduate students 15 pages) with footnotes and bibliography, devoted to a writer or a specific cultural or historical issue. The student must try to prove a thesis in his paper.
4. Mid-term
5. Final exam.

Oral Presentations: Graduate students will have to make a presentation summarizing the findings of their term paper. The presentation will have to last around ten minutes long and a summary with sources will be given to the instructor.

Book Review: Graduate students will write a 2-page book review of a non-fiction work on some aspect of World War I. The book will be chosen by the student, but must also be approved by the instructor.

This is an intensive reading course. Students must complete the assigned readings by the due date. There will be no extra credit.

Term paper proposal not handed into me by class time February 24, will received no points, but still must be turned .

Any term paper not handed in to me by 6 pm on Tuesday, April 21 will be penalized 5 points, with an additional deduction of 5 points per 24-hour day it is late (weekends and holidays included). Thus, a paper handed in after 6 pm , April 21,, but by 6 pm on Wednesday, April 22 will be penalized 5 points. The instructor encourages students to seek his assistance and guidance as work on their paper progresses.

Grading

1. Undergraduates

Mid-term 100 points; Final 100 points; Term paper proposal, 50 points; Term paper 100 points; Note cards, 180 points

2. Graduates

Book Review, 50 points, Mid-term 100 points; final 100 points; term paper proposal, 50 points; term paper, 100 points; presentations 50 points; Note cards, 180 point

Penalties for plagiarism and cheating:

For the first act of academic dishonesty the instructor will issue a warning to the student. A second act will result in a zero for the assignment and will be reported to university officials. For any act of academic dishonesty the instructor will assign a zero to the particular assignment. “USI considers academic dishonesty (defined by the Dean of Students as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, interference with another student’s work, or facilitating academic dishonesty) to be a serious misconduct and subject to disciplinary measures up to and including expulsion from the university. These infractions and the penalties are explained further at the Dean of Students’ website: http://www.usi.edu/stl/section_changes.asp. It is your responsibility to read this site and comply with its requirements.”

Required Classroom behavior:

No one is allowed to leave the class early without a good reason. If you know you have to leave, you must tell me before class begins. I may and will ask those who are disrupting the class to leave early. All cell phones and pagers must be turned off or set to vibrate mode. Students will not be allowed to use computers or any other electronic devices during class. There will be no reading of newspapers or extraneous material or doing of other homework while I lecture. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor whenever there is a perceived difficulty.

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. I do not give out points for attendance. I do, however, take attendance, as it is required by the university. Students who miss half or more of the class meetings during weeks two through four risk being administratively withdrawn from the class. If you do miss that many classes, you will receive in the mail a note from the university telling you that you are in danger of being with withdrawn. You must then meet with the instructor to explain your absences. I will have a seating chart that I will establish after the first week of drop-and-add. **If a student misses more than two classes for any reason, 50 points will be deducted from his final score**