The Great War
History 407 – Spring 2010
Thursday 2-4:50
CRN 32958
MCK 473

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Office hours: Monday, 11-12:30; Friday, 12-1:30; or by appointment

Generalities

This course has two basic aims. The first is to examine several of the major interpretative issues surrounding the history of World War I. The second is to produce a substantial research paper (think in terms of between twenty and twenty-five pages of text).

Class days will be divided into two parts. In the first part we will discuss the week’s readings and topics. The second part (the “research workshop”) will be devoted to your research projects: choosing and framing a research topic; locating materials and developing a research strategy; organizing materials and writing the paper. Some days we may flip-flop the order.

Class attendance, preparation, and all assignments are obligatory (and should be typed and printed). Final grades will be based on the research paper. Your final grade cannot be higher than the grade on the paper. However, failure to complete assigned reading or written assignments can lower your final grade.

Books for purchase

None – all materials will be available either on Blackboard, through library links, or through the Summit library system. On Blackboard files and links can be found in the “Course Readings” content area.

Assignments

April 8: Summary of interpretative positions of book on WWI
April 15: brainstorm topics – brief description of potential topics
April 22: research paper proposal
April 29: book review: most important secondary work on your topic
May 6: 30-minute drill – book review of book you have spent 30 minutes reading
May 20: paper outline
May 27: rough drafts due
June 3: rough draft reviews
June 10: **Final draft of papers due in my office**

**Class Schedule**

April 1: Interpreting the Great War

**Discussion topics:**
1) thinking about World War I
2) sources and topics: brainstorming topics for papers

Research workshop: Where to find materials. How to find materials.

April 8: Interpretative positions

**Discussion topic:** the books you have all read.

Research workshop: what makes a good research paper topic?

**Assignment Due:** you have now all read a general history of World War I. A summary of your book’s interpretative positions on the question listed on the assignment sheet (you should have a copy but you can find another one on Blackboard: Course Information)

April 15: Origins and causes


**N.B.**: Schroeder is not an easy read: make sure to give yourself enough time to work out 1) how his argument works; and 2) what the implications are with respect to “responsibility” for the war.

**Discussion topics:**
1) We’ll start by getting Remak’s and Schroeder’s arguments straight; then
2) Remak and Schroeder offer two diverging accounts of the origins of the war from a “systemic” perspective (that is, looking at the European system as a whole): which of these accounts is closer to that offered in the survey you read? Why?
3) One way to test historical arguments is to compare them to primary source materials: do you find confirmation for Remak or Schroeder in the materials reproduced in Menning? **Come in with at least one example** that you think supports Schroeder’s general interpretation, and one example that supports Remak’s general interpretation.

Research workshop: framing questions

**Assignment due:** submit (typed) five possible topics (including brief description of the larger aim or research question that the paper might try to answer) for a seminar paper, of which:
- at least one should be about a person
- at least one should be focused on a specific event
- at least one should be on a social, economic, or cultural issue

April 22: How decisions were made: Germany and Austria


Discussion topics:

1) Mommsen and Afflerbach offer two contrasting ways of understanding the “unspoken assumptions” that shaped German policy-makers decision-making during the July Crisis: which of these accounts is closer to that offered in the survey you read? Why? More generally, what emphasis did your book place on decision-making?

2) Looking at the primary materials, whose argument is stronger, Mommsen’s or Afflerbach’s?

Research workshop: judging materials, reading for facts, reading for arguments

**Assignment due:** research paper proposal.
Your proposals should include two parts:

1) a description of your topic and a discussion of the question or problem you hope to answer or illuminate (about a page);

2) a preliminary bibliography of source materials (divide it into two: a section for primary sources and a section for secondary sources. Alphabetize by author or editor within each section. Use proper bibliographical form (see Blackboard site for link to proper bibliographical forms). Do it right now and you will be able to use this later for your final paper).
April 29: How wars are won: military effectiveness, tactics and strategy

   Reading: Tim Travers, “The Allied Victories, 1918” (ch. 21 of The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War); Military Effectiveness in World War I (introduction and the chapter on the country you are doing your research on); and Niall Ferguson, “Strategy, Tactics, and the Net Body Count,” (ch. 10 of The Pity of War).

   Discussion topic: did the Allies win the war “militarily”? Why or why not? What does the example of your country suggest about significance of military effectiveness?

   Research workshop: Reading footnotes and endnotes (we’ll use as our examples Schroeder, Afflerbach, and Ferguson – take a look at their notes and see what you learn from them: everyone come in with at least one example of a note that you think is particularly telling – a note that tells you something important)

   **Assignment due:** Book review.
   Choose what you judge (at this point) to be the single most important secondary work on your paper topic, **regardless of length.** Read it and write a two-to-three page review. Your review should include a description of the book’s topic, a review of its argument, and an assessment of the strength of the argument and its use of sources.

May 6: How wars are won: economic explanations

   Reading: Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison, “The Economics of World War I: an overview” (ch. 1 of Broadberry and Harrison, eds., The Economics of World War I); and the chapter on the country on which you are doing research; and Niall Ferguson, “Economic Capability: The Advantage Squandered,” (ch. 9 of The Pity of War).

   Discussion topic: did the Allies win the war due to superiority of resources? Why or why not? What does the example of your country indicate about the importance of economic factors (resources or resource utilization)?
   Pay careful attention Broadberry’s and Harrison’s introduction: we’ll start with their basic claims and methodology and then look at Ferguson and examples of specific countries.

   Research Workshop: what to cite, when to cite, how to cite. Come to class with at least one examples of when one must cite and one example of when one should cite. When can you not cite?

May 13: How wars end: the European settlement


Discussion topic: what kinds of problems faced the victors in establishing a reparations settlement? Was it fair? Why or why not? Was it practicable? We’ll start with Keynes, compare it to Trachtenberg, and then compare both to the evidence of the Deliberations.

Research workshop: introductions – different kinds of introductions, different ways of introducing the material, the subject, the problem. (To prepare for discussion, think about the different kinds of introductions you have read this quarter. Take a look at Schroeder’s article: how does he set up his argument? How about Mommsen? What about Ferguson’s economic chapter?)

May 20: How wars end: the international settlement

Reading: materials on middle east settlement from Keylor, The Legacy of the Great War; excerpts from Link, ed., Deliberations of the Council of Four; Alan Sharp; Brose?

Discussion topics: what kinds of problems faced the victors in establishing an international territorial settlement? Was it fair? Why or why not? Was it practicable? We’ll start with the primary source materials and then compare them to the general assessments.

Research workshop: Conclusions
1) conclusions – different kinds of conclusion, different ways of concluding. Your topic in historical time. (Like last week, you might think about some of the
materials you have read this quarter: how have different authors concluded their articles?)

2) what to do if you get writer’s block. What do you do?

**Assignment due**: basic outline of paper. The outline should include a statement of the problem (or how you are framing the question), as well as a list of topics needed to address that problem or question. Place these in the order you expect to discuss them in the paper. You do not need to worry about the conclusion at this point.

**N.B.**: as paradoxical as it might seem, it is easier to come up with an outline if you have started to write: even a little bit of writing will help to clarify where you are going.

May 28: **Rough drafts due**

Come to class with four copies of your rough drafts. Bring whatever you have, no matter what the condition of your paper. It does not need to be complete but readers will find it helpful if you indicate what is missing.

We will exchange papers in class and talk about what we’ll be doing next week.

June 3: Discussion of rough drafts

**Assignment due**: Rough draft reviews
Bring two copies of each review, one for me and one for the author.

June 10: (Wednesday, finals week): **Final drafts due**

One copy of your final draft, due in my office at 2:00.

Anyone not turning in a paper by this time will receive an “I.” I’ll submit a grade when I return from a conference I must attend. **N.B.**: I may have to adjust this date depending on when I leave.