History 428/528: **The First World War**

Instructor: Alexander Kashirin  
Time: 10:00 a.m.-11:20 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays  
Place: 105 Peretson Hall  
Office: 340 X at MCK  
Office Hours: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on Mondays (or by appointment)  
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**Course Description:**

Although WW II proved to be more brutal and much more costly in terms of both human and material losses, WW I was the first “total war” and it is not in vain that it went down in the annals of history, especially the commemoration literature, as the Great War. Brought about by the old smoldering imperial rivalries, paranoia over the established spheres of influence, hunger for a new re-division of the world, popular jingoism and general ignorance of how exactly the recent advancements in military technology would play out on the battlefield, the war severely tested the old school military strategies, drove the frontline soldiers to the point of mutiny, radicalized labor politics, and forced the belligerent countries’ leaderships scramble for resources to sustain what proved to be the “war of economies.” At the war’s end, the ruling houses of Europe found themselves without their empires, as the dominant prewar ideologies and enthusiastic faith in technological progress gave way to general pessimism, iconoclastic trends in philosophy and art, and violent social revolutions.

The course will draw on the rich scholarship of the subject and provide students with an opportunity to examine the impact of total war on various segments of human society—soldiers, home front industrial workers, civilians, revolutionaries, ethnic minorities, colonial auxiliary troops, etc. The course’s ultimate objective is to provide an informed and engaging scholarly environment in which the students could form a solid overall understanding of the war’s causes, challenges of its prosecution, its impact on the human body and psyche, and its lasting legacy in the realm of the world’s political geography.

**History 428 Requirements:**

The students are expected to regularly attend lectures, actively participate in the discussion of weekly readings (and thus earn a few extra points), write a 10-12 page research paper (40%) on a pre-approved topic (see paper topic assignment), and take a midterm (30%) and a non-cumulative final (30%).

**History 528 Requirements**

Aside from attending lectures, participating in the discussion of weekly readings (assigned for History 428), and taking a midterm and a final with the rest of the class, graduate students will have to write a more substantial research paper (18-20 pages) on a pre-approved topic of their choosing and meet with the instructor separately once every three weeks to discuss the following additional readings:


**History 428 Required Readings** (available in bookstore):

Hew Strachan, *The First World War*
Denis Winter, *Death’s Men: Soldiers of the Great War*
Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*
Jean Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People*

**Additional required readings are posted on Blackboard**

**Week One**

**Origins and the Outbreak of WW I: The Diplomatic Chess Game of Political Alliances, the Future War Scenarios, War Propaganda, and the Initial Stage**

September 30
Dennis Showalter, “The Circus Rider of Europe” (on Blackboard); Michael Howard, “Europe on the Eve of the First World War” (on Blackboard); The “Willy-Nicky” Telegrams (on Blackboard).

October 2

**Week Two**

**The War Goes Global**

October 7

October 9
Hew Strachan, The First World War, p. 132-197. **Paper topic assignments are posted on Blackboard**

**Week Three**
The Trench War Deadlock, the Revolution, and the Breakthrough

October 14  No class in observance of Columbus Day, but please do the assigned readings

October 16

**Week Four**

The Soldiers’ Experiences

October 21

October 23

**Week Five**

The Soldiers’ Experiences Continued

October 28

October 30
            **Midterm Examination**

**Week Six**

Managing the Home Front

November 4

November 6

**Week Seven**

Managing the Home Front: The Crisis of Morale
November 11 **No class again due to the Veterans Day, but please do the assigned readings**

November 13

**Week Eight**

The Cultural History of the Great War

November 18

November 20

**Week Nine**

The Cultural History of the Great War Continued

November 25

November 27

**Week Ten**

Examining the War’s Legacy

December 2
President Woodrow Wilson, “The Fourteen Points” (on Blackboard); John Maynard Keynes, “The Carthaginian Peace” (on Blackboard).

December 4
Alan Sharp, “The Mandate System in the Colonial World” (on Blackboard); Richard Watt, “The Kings Depart” (on Blackboard). **Papers are due in class.**

**Final Examination**: Monday, December 9, at 10:15 a.m.