



SELF PROGRAM 2022/2023

World War I: The Great War and Global Transformation

Prof. Trevor J. Kallimani

Course information

Number of credits: 6 credits

Contact hours: 30 hours

Hours taught per week: 2,5

Teaching period: fall semester 2022

Course description:

Arguably, no event in modern history has had a greater impact on the 20th and 21st centuries than the First World War, which contemporaries called the “Great War” or sometimes rather optimistically, the “War to End All Wars”.

The Great War transformed society, politics, culture, art, and literature; virtually every aspect of human life. It precipitated several national revolutionary movements, and the downfall of centuries old monarchical dynasties. The most notable example being of course the Russian

Revolution, which brought onto the world stage the first nation founded on the principles of revolutionary communism. It redrew the maps of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, bringing into the community of recognized nations a host of new countries, and in so doing created tensions that would be at the heart of nearly every other armed conflict of the 20th and 21st centuries. It punctuated a period of intense globalization, and although it may have imposed a temporary pause to further economic and political integration, it also led to the creation of the world's first forum for the resolution of international disputes and the precursor for the modern United Nations.

As the author of our primary course reading expresses it, “Historic events are often said to have ‘changed everything.’ In the case of the Great War this is, for once, true. The war really did change everything: not just borders, not just governments and the fate of nations, but the way people have seen the world and themselves ever since. It became a kind of hole in time, leaving the postwar world permanently disconnected from everything that had come before.” (Meyer 469)

In this course we will analyse and explore this pivotal historical event, using multiple perspectives and forms of media. The course will begin with a social, political and cultural portrait of Europe and the world at the turn of the century, with the aim of understanding the ideas and institutions which laid the foundations for such a destructive global conflict. We will also zoom in and look at the diplomatic and political decisions that were made, especially in the Summer of 1914, and how a local conflict in Eastern Europe unexpectedly exploded into a world war. We will then spend several weeks examining the front and the home front, in order to understand how the war revolutionized modern warfare, but also how it revolutionized modern civil societies. We will then finish up by looking at the Armistice, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, and the creation of the League of Nations. Our objective here will be to understand how, and to what extent, the decisions made at the end of the War would lead to the subsequent wars of the 20th century, most notably the Second World War.

Prerequisites:

Knowledge of 19th century world history is desirable but not required.

Course objectives:

The objective is to explore how understanding the First World War can help us to understand the modern world. For students of international relations and diplomacy a solid understanding of the First World War is indispensable. It is also an important foundation for anyone studying 20th century history, both from the national as well as the international standpoint and regardless of one's specialization. Of course, this class can also be useful for students of almost any area of the human sciences, including certain areas of business studies

such as management and marketing. Indeed, the propaganda perfected during the war, through the use of mass media, was an important precursor to modern marketing, while the management of the world's first multi-million man armies is an important case study for the emergence of modern 20th century bureaucratic organizations. After all, an effective 20th century military commander will be a pencil pushing, not a wielder of swords.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed through two written exams and a group presentation. The presentation will be a chance for students to explore topics that do not fit perfectly with the central themes of the course lectures and readings.

- Participation/Attendance: 10%
- Final Exam: 35%
- Midterm Exam: 35%
- Group Presentation: 20%

Attendance:

In order to participate, students must be present. Nevertheless, a maximum of 2 (two) unexcused absences will be allowed; otherwise no mark will be given.

An unexcused absence at a test (final test or continuous assessment) means no credits for the course.

Bibliography:

Required:

Writing a one-volume book that covers a topic as vast as the Great War is a nearly impossible task, but journalist G.J. Meyer has done about as well as anyone possibly could. This *New York Times* best-seller combines solid scholarship and readability. This is the only book you are required to purchase.

Meyer, G.J. *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918*. Delacorte Press, 2006.

Recommended:

Much has been written about the outbreak of the war. Three works in particular, one fairly old and two relatively new, stand out among the rest. For the end of the war and its aftermath we will be reading extracts from another history by Margaret MacMillan. *A World Undone* has a fairly exhaustive bibliography at the end of the book for students looking for

presentation topics and/or resources. There are also several excellent lectures by Margaret MacMillan, Christopher Clark, and Richard Evans on Youtube, which complement the course readings. Links will be provided in class.

Clark, Christopher. *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. Harper Collins, 2013

MacMillan, Margaret. *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. Random House, 2002.

MacMillan, Margaret. *The War that Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War*. Profile Books, 2013.

Tuchman, Barbara W. *The Guns of August*. MacMillan Publishing, 1962.