# Course Syllabus

**World War I: The Great War and the World It Made**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Greatest War</td>
<td>6-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Opening Shots</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gallipoli and the Neer and Middle East</td>
<td>17-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1915 in the West</td>
<td>23-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Home Fronts</td>
<td>30-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Western Front in 1916</td>
<td>36-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Eastern Front</td>
<td>41-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A Literary and Artistic War</td>
<td>47-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1917 in the West</td>
<td>53-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The War at Sea</td>
<td>58-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>America Goes to War</td>
<td>63-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Germany Almost Wins the War in 1918</td>
<td>69-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Victory in the West</td>
<td>74-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Aftermath and Reputation</td>
<td>80-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course Materials</td>
<td>85-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recorded Books and Additional Websites</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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About Your Professor

John Ramsden

Professor Ramsden was educated at Oxford University and has taught at Queen Mary University of London since 1972. He is currently a professor of modern history and director of the Humanities and Social Sciences Graduate School, and was formerly head of history and dean of the Faculty of Arts.

Professor Ramsden has been a visiting professor of history at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, 1995-96; a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellow in New Zealand, 1999; and a Distinguished Academic Visitor at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, in 2001. He is a former literary director of the Royal Historical Society and chairman of the InterUniversity History Film Consortium. From 1984 to 1990, he was a director of the historian’s Press. Professor Ramsden currently serves on the Academic Board of the Churchill Centre, based in Washington, D.C.

Professor Ramsden’s main line of research to date has been in the twentieth-century history of the British Conservative Party, on which he gained an Oxford doctor of philosophy in 1974. He has written all three twentieth-century volumes of the Longman History of the Conservative Party; edited for publication the political diaries of Sir Robert Sanders, Lord Bayford, 1910-35; and published with HarperCollins in 1998 An Appetite for Power, a single-volume history of the Conservatives since 1832.

Professor Ramsden was general editor of the Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century British Politics and co-author with Professor Glyn Williams of Ruling Britannia, a textbook history of Britain since 1688. He published in 2002 The Dam Busters, a book on the British film of 1955, and Man of the Century, a book on the postwar image and reputation of Winston Churchill.

John Ramsden has been teaching a course on the Great War in the University of London for the past twenty years.

Introduction

“The Great War” as it was known at the time was also said to be the “war to end all wars.” It seized all of Europe and much of the rest of the world in its grip of death and destruction. The first truly modern war, it changed how war—and peace—would be conducted throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and even to the present.
Lecture 1: The Greatest War

Before beginning this lecture you may want to...
Read James Joll's Origins of the First World War.

Introduction:
The war of 1914-18 ushered in the modern world in so many ways; it was the first genuinely worldwide conflict in which almost all the major developed countries took part, with fighting on all continents; the first to have fighting on land, at sea and in the air; it introduced the use of modern weapons and munitions developed by industrialised economies in hitherto unimaginable quantities and destructive effectiveness; it shaped the international political scene of the rest of the century, since both Fascism and Communism can be seen as being spawned by the war; it changed the relationship of the individual and the state, the gender relationships of man and woman, and the role of artists and the media in free societies. It was, as it was always called until 1939, the Great War. As the American writer Paul Fussell has argued, memory of the Great War remains a central part of our view of ourselves and what it means to live in the modern world.

Issues . . .
1. The shifts in international power relations in the 19th century.
2. The rise of Imperial Germany and the reactions of her neighbours.
3. Diplomatic crises and the slide into war in 1914.
4. Which country was most responsible for the Great War?

A Century of (Relative) Peace
- There were few major wars in 1815-1914, and those were mainly short and geographically limited.
- Mainly a time of British economic and maritime dominance; colonialism and the Empire, separate spheres of influence but tension where they collided.
- US manifest destiny was contained within the continent until the 1890s; Russian expansion similarly contained within Asia.
- Growing economic competition occurred as Britain's lead as the first industrialised country was eroded, but economic rivalry largely channelled until the 1890s into colonial expansion.
- But the 19th century was also the age of nationalism all over the developed world; growing literacy and political participation meant that national conflicts would also be popular conflicts with mass participation.
- The growing scale of the few wars fought and their bitter antagonisms at the popular level.
- Declining empires and the threat that they posed: Spain, Portugal and even Britain, but Turkey and Austria-Hungary the bigger and more immediate dangers, as the vultures circled.

The Rise of Germany
- German nationalism derived from resistance to Napoleon after 1806 but took half a century to become effective politically.
- The Prussian monarchy was the political entity around which the German nation united; the Prussian historical tradition, and the special features of Prussian development.
- National unity through war in 1863-1871: Bismarck's political genius, combining force with political skills and achievable aims in "the art of the possible": but the legacy of Alsace-Lorraine and French revanchisme remained.
- Germany was an international patron of the Dutch and the Austrians, Pan-Germanism a dream for Germans and a threat to other nationalities.
- German policy shifts after 1890: the Kaiser "drops the pilot" (Bismarck) and goes for personal rule and weltpolitik.
- Popular and press support for asserting Germany's claims to a "place in the sun"; what would be the limits?

Rivalries and Alliance Blocks
- Shifting coalitions of powers from 1815 onwards: compare 1820, 1854, 1870 and 1894; colonial conflicts and their limiting impact on lasting alliances, though less true for the more Europe-centered powers.
- The closing colonial frontiers in the 1890s, not only for the USA, and the shift of focus back towards Europe, allowing more permanent alliances to be formed.
- From 1994, Germany plus Austria-Hungary (and perhaps Italy) faced France and Russia; central Europe faced the periphery, and the "Central powers" feared encirclement, having to fight facing east and west at once.

- Britain "splendidly isolated" in the mid-1890s, needed to be so because of colonial issues.

- But a rough balance of power was maintained: Germany too strong militarily to fear France and Russia very much, France too fearful of Germany to provoke war even to win back her lost provinces; so the addition of Britain to the alliances would destabilise the balance.

**The Anglo-German Antagonism and the Naval Race**

- An effective stand-off in 1871-1896: Germany dominant on land but had small navy; Britain dominant at sea but had small army, so neither felt threatened by the other.

- After 1890, a growing antagonism at all levels, especially after the Boer War: diplomatic, personal, press and public opinion all more antagonistic; alliance talks in 1900-1902 and why they failed.

- Tirpitz's naval building programme, mobilising German support for naval expansion.

- This provoked Britain's horrified reaction—her popular history, island identity, invasion novels and spy scares; the Kaiser as a bogeyman and his own dangerous posturings.

- The "naval race" which Britain was sure to win; why did Germany persist? The symbols of Great Power status and the rights of national independence.

**Pre-war Diplomatic Crises, 1904-1914**

- Britain ends her isolation in 1902-4: signs a treaty with Japan and an Entente with France; both very limited in scope.

- Crisis over Morocco in 1904-5: Germany tests the Entente and it strengthens as a result.

- Britain allies with Russia too, 1907: now two blocs of powers are lined up against each other across Europe, the sides that actually fought in 1914.

- 1911: a near war and the Entente powers once again become closer: military and naval plans.

- Germany is now dependent on the Schlieffen Plan as its only strategy.

- Was there a wider readiness for a "war by timetable"?

- Heads of state and leading politicians were losing control of the agenda as military and naval planning took over.

**Sarajevo and the Drift into War**

- Dual-Monarchy Austria-Hungary worried about its subject peoples; the need to show a tough front to maintain the Empire in the Balkans; growing Serbian aspirations and unstable Balkan alliances.

- Assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo: the slow-burning fuse lit, but why should this lead to world war? It was not expected to do so for another month.

- Great power patrons and their clients—Germans versus Slavs—and the determination not to lose face; the entanglements of alliances outside that network.

- The demands of mobilisation timetables to get the troops to the frontiers; if there is a war, then we must start now. No reverse gears, no effective
"Just for a word, 'neutrality'-a word that in wartime has so often been disregarded-just for a scrap of paper, Great Britain is going to make war on a kindred nation, which desires nothing better than to be friends with her."

-Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, German Imperial Chancellor

Enjoyment and the failure of private channels of communication. For the USA, this seems all to be a great failure of the 'old diplomacy' of the old world.

- Between 28 July and 3 August Germany, France, Austria, Serbia and Russia go to war, but not yet Britain; Britain hesitates and then goes in on 4 August over Belgium; "Belgium" becomes a moral cause for the allies fighting for freedom against "militarism."

Germany's War Guilt?
- The "war guilt" clause in the Treaty of Versailles and its historical legacy as an issue.

- Need to distinguish long- and short-term causes, the powder and the fuse; but also to be aware of the broad but separate impact of the rhetoric of Germany's wept politik ambitions.

- War-mindedness common right across Europe after a century of near peace, so perhaps not enough was done anywhere to stave off the real thing?

- In the long term, German ambitions were destabilising and neighbours felt threatened, especially Britain, hence her alliance with France which seemed to give the French a chance in a war against Germany.

- But if Germany was destabilising the status quo, were the Entente powers equally responsible by inflexibly defending their interests?

- In the short term, German encouragement of Austria was a key moment in turning crisis into war, and German dependence on the Schlieffen Plan was the critical factor in turning a local war into a world war involving France, Britain and eventually the United States, too. This was the verdict of Fritz Fischer and of Paul Kennedy.

"When one asks which nation finally disturbed the status quo in Europe sufficiently to bring on the war, it is difficult to answer with any other name than Germany."


The German eagle looks toward Paris in a cartoon from Punch magazine, 1914.
Lecture 2: Opening Shots

Before beginning this lecture you may want to...
Read Barbara Tuchman's The Guns of August.

Introduction:
The popular image of the First World War is of static trench warfare, grim and immobile efforts for the infantry, with generals invariably unable to maintain any effective control of events. But the opening campaigns during 1914 were affairs of flair and movement, in which gaily-caponised cavalry played a role and the decisions of generals had a dramatic impact on the outcome. At first the German army swept all before it, in both East and West, but the "miracle on the Marne" saved Paris from capture by Germany and effectively prevented Germany from winning the war in the first few months. Only at the end of 1914 did the war become a battle in which the spade was as important as the rifle. The war that in August 1914 was widely expected to be "over by Christmas" would now go on for over four gruelling years.

Issues . . .
1. How was the war planned in advance?
2. The German advance of August 1914.
3. The "Miracle on the Marne" and the beginnings of the long war.

War Plans of the Powers
- Russia: overwhelming numbers to be thrown into battle as early as possible, numbers defeating shortfalls in equipment and training.
- Britain: naval war the priority, strangling the German economy and protecting vital trade; she would send the army to France, expand the forces only when war started, so there would be a slow start to the land war.
- France: aimed to avenge defeat in 1870, reclaiming Alsace and Lorraine, with a broad front advance, but especially in the South.

Germany: would hold in the East and smash in the West; war by railway timetable? Did the plan dictate the decision to go to war? Did it dictate the form of the warfare?

Tannenberg
- Relatively small German forces awaited the "Russian steamroller" in East Prussia, within the German Empire itself.
- Huge German tactical victory at Tannenberg, removing the immediate threat to Germany from Russia.
- This allowed German dictation of the pace of the war in the East after 1914, so remaining relatively free to concentrate on the West.
- The Eastern Front story is continued in lecture 7, but we need to remember that it was a continuing accompaniment to the now better-known Western Front.

The Schlieffen Plan and Its Execution
- Germany's historic fear of encirclement and of a war on two fronts at the same time.
- Count Alfred von Schlieffen and his bold plan, made in 1905, to hold on in the East, and to knock out France in one campaign, like 1870, with no time for Britain to become relevant to the war's outcome.
- The simplicity of the concept; a heavyweight's right hook, keeping the enemy off balance, overwhelming force at one critical point; this was typical of the German way in warfare.
- Moltke's amendments to the plan and their effect in its chances of success.
“They are beginning to face the possibility of a siege of Paris, in which case we might be cut off. If that should happen, endure it with courage, for our personal desires are nothing in comparison with the great struggle that is now under way.”

~Marie Curie to her daughter, 28 August 1914

Belgium and “Atrocities”
- Time being the essence, so invasion begins without declaring war; German highhandedness in dealing with the Belgian government.
- Belgium’s refusal to submit, resistance enlisting international sympathy.
- Smashing the fortresses, and keeping moving, so a rapid German advance.
- The British advance to—and retreat from—Mons; firepower of the trained professionals no substitute for numbers.
- German “atrocities against Belgians”, what happened and what was claimed to have happened; the Bryce report; recent evidence from Horne and Kramer proves “atrocities.”
- Allied propaganda after Belgium; Belgium occupied; Herbert Hoover and Belgian relief.

First Battle of the Marne
- Germany’s sweeping successes, Paris comes under fire, government planning to leave, panic in the French capital, but also resolution.
- Moltke’s loss of nerve, the confusions of intelligence in the “fog of war,” and the unauthorised German left wheel in front of Paris.
- Marshal “Papa” Joffre counterattacks in the Marne valley, British and French troops, using the taxis and the Paris omnibuses.
- Paris is saved and the Germans in retreat, but the French army exhausted; the legend of the “miracle” on the Marne.

“A dispatch from the front in France... says: ‘The German right, commanded by General von Kluck, has been turned by the allies between Peronne and St. Quentin... Nine miles of trenches are filled with the dead.'”

~Los Angeles Examiner, 23 September 1914

Race to the Sea and Digging In for the Long Haul
- Digging in, entrenching the infantry, setting the machine guns and artillery; fulfilling the amateur forecasts of a Polish banker, Ivan Bloch, and showing the reality of the war.
- Both sides now had open northern flanks, and deep worries on both sides about being outflanked and enveloped.
- Competitive outflanking movements take place, racing to the North Sea through October and November 1914.
- Switzerland to the Sea, Christmas 1914; the war is not over, and the “Christmas truce” as the last moment of pre-war innocence; New Year, 1915, and what it promises for the future.

“On New Year’s Eve... we sang, they applauded—our lines were only some two hundred feet apart. We played the mouth organ, they sang to our music, and then we applauded. I called over to ask whether they had some musical instruments, on which they produced some bagpipes (they were an Ascots Guards regiment, with kilts and bare legs)... At midnight both sides fired shots in the air... tracer bullets, usually so lethal, soared like harmless fireworks. Men were waving torches and cheering. We had prepared grog and drank a toast to Kaiser Wilhelm and the New Year.”

~A German soldier’s letter to his family, January 1915
Consider

1. Why did Germany pin its hopes for a quick victory on a knock-out blow in the West?
2. Could better German generalship have won the war for Germany in October 1914?
3. Why do we forget the war as it was in 1914, all action, colour and excitement?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

2. www.worldwar1.com/twwplans.htm - World War I.com page with a timeline of the war plans of the major (and some minor) participants in the war.
3. www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWWmarne.htm - Spartacus School Net page on the first Battle of the Marne.

Recorded Books


To order Recorded Books, call 1-800-636-3399 or go to www.modernscholar.com. Also available for rental.

Lecture 3: Gallipoli and the Near and Middle East

Before beginning this lecture you may want to ...
Read Alan Moorehead's Gallipoli.

Introduction:

From the start this was a world war on several continents, with early naval actions in South America and the Pacific Ocean. The evenly balanced naval warfare on the Western Front encouraged each side to search for new fronts and new allies, but especially the Western powers. The Anglo-French attack on Turkey at Gallipoli was, though, a costly defeat in what was always essentially a sideshow. As the war progressed, the Near and Middle Eastern campaigns tied up many Allied troops and paid off only at the end. On the way to that end, though, the war threw up, in Lawrence of Arabia, one of its few genuinely romantic heroes.

Issues ...

1. The spread of the war to involve operations outside Europe.
2. Strategic debates: Easterners versus Westerners.
3. The Gallipoli fiasco.
4. The successful war against Turkey; Lawrence of Arabia.

Colonial Wars and British Empire Troops

- Over the first year of the war British and Empire forces occupied German colonies around the world in the Pacific, China, and West and South West Africa.
- Most such campaigns were short, but in German East Africa the small garrison held out throughout the war. Their commander General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, a real military genius who, with only 3,000 German soldiers tied up 50,000 British and South African troops for four years, eventually fighting around the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro; he surrendered only two weeks after war ended in Europe.
Belligerent countries mobilised troops from their empires to relieve the mother country when short of men, for example North African soldiers used by France, and Indian troops used by Britain. There was, though, general resistance to using non-white soldiers in a European war, and Asian manpower was more often used in labour and construction battalions; reflected in the policy of the Indian and Chinese cemetery in France.

Britain had major resources in the "white dominions," the settler societies in Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. These countries, at war simply because Britain was fighting, contributed fit and skilled soldiers to the British army. What they lacked in discipline was made up in morale and fighting power; they made up about one-sixth of the whole British army.

The war encouraged the growth of dominion national consciousness; the Anzacs and the self-identity of Australia, in myth and reality.

**Turkey Joins the War**

- Turkey, a crossroads of international communications, and still a major imperial power in the region, sought in alliance by both sides in 1914.
- After the escape of two German warships to Turkey, she opted to join Germany, with which she had pre-war commercial links; they had joint aspirations to build a railway from Berlin to Baghdad.
- Bulgaria later joined Germany at war; Greece, Rumania, and Italy joined the allies.
- This extension of the war by spring 1915 to the Eastern Mediterranean immediately involved a whole series of Balkan issues in alliance war planning (there had already been two Balkan wars in 1912-14, leaving legacies of hatred). Italy for example demanded parts of Dalmatia and the South Tyrol as her price for joining the war after the secret Treaty of London in 1915; old Greek rivalries with Turkey were still being played out in 1922.

- British courting of both Arabs (through supporting their revolt against the Turks) and Jews (the November 1917 Balfour Declaration promising a Jewish national homeland in Palestine) arose in part from the same need for allies, in this case involving contradictory promises and enormous difficulties later.
- For the Western allies, there was an overriding need to establish a secure route, usable in winter, for supplying arms to Russia and exporting Russian grain to Britain and France, both of whom were hard put to maintain agricultural output with so many men in the armed forces. Turkey stood in the way of transport through the Black Sea.

**Easterners and Westerners: Flanking Actions**

- Within allied strategic thinking—but especially British thinking, since France was naturally committed to the Western Front, in France itself—there were those who pressed for flanking campaigns to "go around" the Western Front stalemate.
- Churchill at the Admiralty initially favoured a war in the North, by seizing a Baltic island, sustaining it from the sea, and from there launching a direct attack on Germany, but this seemed exceptionally risky.
- The alternative, which gradually secured military and political support, was to attack Turkey, and so reopen the door to Russian trade through the South. Turkey, in decline for a century, was not thought of as a country that it would be hard to defeat.
- "Easterners" thus argued that this would offer an easier way to attack Germany, by removing one of its weaker props first, then move on to attack Austria-Hungary from the South. How valid was this view?
- "Westerners" (including most British and French army leaders) knew that the war could still be lost in the West, and argued that it could only be won there, since that was where the main enemy had his major forces.

**The Dardanelles and Gallipoli Campaign, 1915-16**

- Churchill's brainchild but a collective decision; initially it was to be "by ships alone" to force the narrows and overawe Constantinople, but thwarted by mines and shore batteries.
"There was no co-ordination of effort. There was no connected plan of action. There was no sense of the importance of time."

— David Lloyd George's War Memoirs

・ Military landings only the back-up plan, and the Anzacs sent only because they were conveniently nearby, but there were always more British and French troops involved.
・ Landings mishandled and not quickly exploited—was there ever a chance that was missed? Nature of the country, and ferocity of Turkish defence under Kemal Atatürk, stiffened by German officers and equipment. The horrors of trench warfare in a hot climate, with flies, and fighting with the enemy always higher up.
・ Second landing failed to break the deadlock, so late in 1915 the armies were withdrawn; a brilliant tactical operation but a serious strategic defeat.

"Oh, the moon shines bright, on Charlie Chaplin,
His boots are cracking, for want of blacking,
And his khaki trousers they want mending,
But please don’t send him,
To the Dardanelles."

— Soldiers' song, 1915

Mesopotamia

・ Troops from Gallipoli and elsewhere landed at Salonika in Greek Macedonia with the aim of launching an attack on Austria-Hungary, but this was never given much priority and was poorly led, so it became "the largest internment camp in the world."
・ Allies were powerless to prevent Germany overrunning Serbia, or to pressure German allies like Bulgaria in the region.
・ British attacks were made on Turkey through Mesopotamia (now Iraq), using Indian army troops, poorly led and badly supplied. General Townshend's army besieged at Kut after an imprudent advance and had to surrender to the Turks after a siege of 145 days: two-thirds of the ordinary soldiers die in the siege and all the surviving Indian soldiers die in a march across the desert after surrender.
・ The Mesopotamian Enquiry found serious weakness in Indian government systems, but also increased respect for Turkey as an enemy.

Lawrence and the Arab Revolt: The Turkish Collapse

・ One front of the war against Turkey did though succeed and also captured the public's imagination, the war in Arabia and Palestine.
・ This battlefront, conveniently situated near the large British garrison and supply stores in Egypt, was gradually built up to pressure the Turks. Palestine offered terrain more suitable for a Western army to use in attack (good cavalry country).
・ Gradual British advance into Palestine under General Allenby, resulting in the capture of Jerusalem in December 1917 and Damascus in October 1918. By October 1918 when Turkey surrendered, her empire had largely been destroyed and the British army was poised to invade Turkey itself over the Syrian frontier.
・ This orthodox and highly successful military campaign was overshadowed in the public mind by the Arab Revolt (June 1916) behind the Turkish lines, a guerrilla campaign supported and at times virtually led by Colonel T.E. Lawrence.
・ The "Lawrence of Arabia" myth and how it was made, by Lowell Thomas and Lawrence himself; the public need for such a romantic hero.
Consider

1. Why did Britain and France attack Turkey?
2. Was the Gallipoli campaign a missed opportunity for the Allies or a costly diversion from the real war?
3. How do we explain the great appeal to contemporaries of Lawrence of Arabia?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

3. www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWWgallipoli.htm - Spartacus School Net page on the Gallipoli campaign.

Lecture 4: 1915 in the West

Before beginning this lecture you may want to...


Introduction:
The year 1915 marks the beginning of the Great War as it is popularly remembered, a contest in which the attacking side had to expend vast resources of munitions and lives to make small gains of ground—gains that were often then lost to counter-attacks. It was the phase of the war in which new technology, and far more terrible weapons, began to be deployed in all theatres of war. It was also the very beginning of the processes by which military leaders began to learn from their mistakes, and slowly to ascend a steep learning curve towards the warfare of manoeuvre that would re-start in 1918.

Issues...

1. The difficulties facing a general in the Great War.
2. The battles of 1915 in the West: Neuve Chapelle, Loos, Artois.
3. New technology and declining ethical standards of warfare.

Strategic Position at the Start of 1915

- Germany had achieved strategic success, but tactical failure in 1914. Her initial advances were checked, but not reversed. The rest of the war would be fought by the German army on foreign territory, and Germany could decide when to attack and when (mainly) to stay on the defence. She could even make strategic retreats, as in 1917 to the prepared Hindenburg defence line, and still keep foreign armies out of Germany.

- The Western allies had suffered a massive setback in 1914: most of Belgium was occupied (hence the importance of Ypres—to British soldiers ("Wipers"), and a large part of Eastern France, including important industri-
al areas. The Allies must therefore attack to reverse these early defeats—
their politicians and public demanded it. Any allied retreat would risk the
French capital and the British supply ports.

- The Western Front was one large convex bulge, pushing from East to
West: so that Germany’s communication lines were shorter, and she could
bring up reinforcements faster as a battle proceeded.

- French casualties were already high: almost a million casualties already in
1914 (380,000 of them killed); no more red trousers and bright blue uni-
forms in 1915.

- But Britain’s army had been so very small in 1914 that it would be late-
1915 or 1916 before Britain sent enough trained troops to make a big
impact on these huge battles of whole nations. As a result Britain was very
much the junior partner to France; this did not change at all that much even in
1916-17 because then it was reinforced by a fear of French defeat.

Problems Facing Great War Generals

- All military history is the story of leapfrogging developments between the
offensive and the defensive forces on the battlefield, in both weaponry and
lactics. In 1914-18, the defensive side was inherently superior, since
machine guns and artillery could break up any attack, while no adequate
weapons existed to give attackers similar advantages—until the tank
became effective. Barbed wire and concrete added to the advantages of
the defensive in static battles.

- A general’s main problem was not having voice control over his armies,
almost unique to 1914-18. Unreliability of the only means of communi-
cation—runners, telephones and spotters (including air reconnaissance).
Difficulty therefore in creeping barrages in the fog of war, or of quickly
reinforcing success or supporting failure.

- How can you train for command at that level?—no peacetime equivalent
forces of suitable size in the British or United States armies, no adequate
understanding of the type of war to be fought in any army. Necessity of trial
and error with entirely new weapons such as tanks and gas; rapid changes
in the tactical use of older weapons such as grenades.

"Good-morning; good-morning!" the General said
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
"He's a cheery old card," grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.
But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

—Siegfried Sassoon, "The General"
• There was usually an initial breakthrough with some ground gained, but it was impossible to sustain the advance when beyond the front line was already blanketed by artillery.
• Slowness of attackers' reserves and guns to advance through devastated battlefields, but defenders could get reserves up through undamaged back areas to counterattack, so they tended to win back the lost territory anyway.
• Attacks were very costly in casualties, but often gained no significant objective; 100,000 French were lost in Battle of Artois.
• Plans for 1916 therefore involved fewer but bigger battles, with more planning and training, as a great Anglo-French coordination.

New Technology and Different Standards of Warfare
• Scale of war dwarfed preparations and expectations; need for massively increased stocks of weapons and munitions. This led to home front strains and political developments that we shall see in lecture 5.
• More and more machine guns, more artillery and bigger shells reinforced the power of defence, and forced attackers to mount huge preliminary bombardments to neutralise enemy defences; ineffectiveness of artillery in counter-battery and wire-cutting work.
• Soldiers of 1914 were not all that unlike the soldiers of 1865 or 1870: unskilled workers with basic rifles. By 1918 developments in tactics and in battlefield weapons made them more like teams of skilled workers, each with a separate specialised function, not unlike the soldiers of 1939-41.
• Conscription of science and technology for every country's war effort, plus massive resources made available by the state, ensured dramatic improvements in the pace of change in weaponry.
• Some early use of tear gas, but poison gas first used by Germany in April 1915 (despite pre-war agreements to ban it as a weapon). Allied retaliation but another propaganda bonus for Britain and France; Germany also introduced flame throwers in July 1915.

“GAS! GAS! Quick boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling;
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, glistening, choking, drowning.”

—W. H. Auden, from “Dulce et Decorum Est”

• By the end of 1915 soldiers had helmets, respirators, and in some cases protective clothing.
• Early work was done on the “tank,” which was first introduced on the battlefield in 1916, slow to become effective but crucial in 1918.
• First use of warplanes and Zeppelins, which (together with some warships) killed civilians as a deliberate war tactic; the similar development of submarines will be covered in lecture 10. Total warfare, horrific modern weaponry and the “empty battlefield” were all features of warfare by the end of 1915.

A British tank goes “over the top” in 1916.
"One can look for miles and see no human being. But in those miles (like moles or rats it seems) thousands, even hundreds of thousands of men... And yet the landscape shows nothing of all this—nothing but a few shattered trees and three or four lines of earth and sandbags... The glamour of red coats—the martial tunes of flag and drum—aides de camp scurrying hither and thither on splendid chargers—lances glittering and swords flashing—how different the old wars must have been."

—Future British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, to his Mother
May 1916

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Consider

1. How far did the strategic and geographical balance determine the war in the West in 1915?
2. Why could generals not prepare before August 1914 for the war that they had to fight in 1915?
3. What lessons should the British and French generals have drawn from their failure to break through in the West in 1915?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

2. www.westernfront.co.uk/thegreatwar/articles/timeline/artois.htm - The Western Front Association page on the Battle of Artois.
Lecture 5: Home Fronts

Before beginning this lecture you may want to... Read Arthur Marwick’s The Deluge, British Society and the Great War and Patrick Fridenson’s The French Home Front, 1914-18.

Introduction:
War was greeted in 1914 by cheering crowds in all the combatant countries, and with the same enthusiasm in Italy in 1915 and the USA in 1917 when they joined the war. This was a war of the peoples, in which for the first time entire economies fought as well as soldiers and sailors, and civilians became casualties in their own homes. Home front morale became a key element in maintaining each country’s war effort, and the need to enlist new allies another reason for the ceaseless propaganda, both domestic and external. Against the tide of pro-war opinion, anti-war movements made only the slightest headway, though their supporters were among the most courageous men and women of the time.

Issues...
1. War enthusiasm, patriotic fervour and anti-war movements.
2. Effects of the war on economies and finance.
4. Censorship and propaganda.

War Enthusiasm, Patriotism, and Mobilisation
- Street scenes in the European capitals in August 1914.

"Of course, during these days, the population of Berlin was greatly excited. Every night, great crowds of people paraded the streets singing ‘Deutschland Uber Alles’ and demanding war. Extras, distributed free, were issued at frequent intervals by the newspapers, and there was a general feeling among the Germans that their years of preparation would now bear fruit, that Germany would conquer the world."
- James W. Gerard, United States ambassador to Berlin

"An indescribable crowd blocked the streets about the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Foreign Office, that even at one o’clock in the morning I had to drive my car by other streets in order to get home. All London has been awake for a week. Soldiers are marching day and night; immense throngs block the streets."
- Walter H. Page, United States ambassador to London

Londoners cheer Australian and New Zealand troops, 1914.

- There was popular enthusiasm and continuing support; hostility to aliens and moves for detention got under way; racial hatred is unleashed.
- Impact of mass casualties; growing war- weariness but generally without defeatism; the soldiers’ view of the war and of its purpose.
- Effectiveness of conscription, lack of resistance, and the continuing volunteering in British Empire forces, though there were some negative shifts in the later part of the war.

Economies, Taxation and Finance
- The unanticipated length and cost of the war, and so the uncontrollable budgets: France, Russia, and the United States each spent 22-24 billion US dollars on the war; Germany 37 billion USD.
- Britain spent 35 billion USD (compared to annual government income of just one billion dollars a year in 1914); national (internal) debt rose tenfold in four years.
- Printing money caused inflation crises in the period up to the mid-1920s; short-term effect in destabilising the weaker regimes like Russia, Italy and Austria; but also weakening political forces resisting extremism in the post-war years.
- Taxing occurred at unprecedented rates (British income tax rose from 5% to 30% in four years); there were huge national and international loans; the flow of the money from the United States to Europe was mainly via Britain; the allied financial crisis of spring 1917.
- Government interventionism increased and there was a growing importance of trade unions, growing state bureaucracies and state control; rationing and food control.

"READERS SHOULD REFUSE SERVICE FROM A GERMAN OR AUSTRIAN WAITER."
- Daily Mail, London

30 31
• This prolonged the desperate desire for “normalcy” in 1919 and the impossibility of achieving it economically.

Changing Gender Roles
• Uncontrolled rush to the war fronts in 1914, with little economic planning and some need to scramble it all later; then the greater impact of an unforeseen long war.
• The war’s insatiable demand for more and more men; female substitution in “men’s jobs” and the decline of numbers in “women’s work”; women worked also as nurses and in the armed forces.
• Women achieved greater independence as earners, and earned more.
• Promises made to men and to trade unions dictated a fall-back after 1918, but this was still a milestone for the feminist movement; growing independence of attitude and behaviour, and a key factor in gaining the vote, 1914-20 in the United Kingdom, the United States (federal elections), Germany, and many other countries.
• There was also a “crisis of masculinity” on the battlefield and in the war hospitals; emergence of “shell-shock” as a concept, and its implications for male self-images.
• Treatment of war neuroses and the war was a milestone in the acceptance of psychiatric medicine.

“To the women of France, the war had brought an emancipatory revolution. Never had they been so great a power in the country. At the outbreak of war, to a woman they had rushed off to become nurses, fill the administrative gaps left by men, work in the munitions factories. The soldiers grumbled on returning home to find their wives turned yellow by picric acid, but they had little redress.”

—Alistair Horne, The Price of Glory

political Control of the War Powers
• This was the first prolonged mass warfare of literate democracies; impact of the mass media on the electorates and consequent pressures on governments.
• Civilian ministers were out of their depth in war planning; the drift towards military government, and subsequent struggles to control the generals.
• Compromising democracy itself, curtailing freedoms and sometimes elections.
• There were shifts to the right within legislatures and governments, and by individuals: Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Australia’s Billy Hughes; playing the populist card for patriotic purposes.

“Harlot, yes. But traitress? Never!”
attributed to Mata Hari, while on trial

Mata Hari
(1876-1917)
Gertrude Margarette Zelle was a dancer on the French stage.

• Heads of state contributed to the processes of war.

Censorship and Propaganda
• Civilian morale was a fourth arm of warfare, and produced the urge to “inform” the public responsibly; voluntarist and state-directed propaganda.
• Spy scares and the need to combat them; the impact of Mata Hari as double agent (executed October 1917 in France).
• Crackdown in many countries in 1918 on deviant behaviour, enforcement of conformity.
• Newspaper censorship for security and morale; but how necessary was it? Patriotism and growing sales of the popular press.
• Cinema, books, music and other media.
• German “atrocities” in 1914 and afterwards; state-mobilised hatred of the enemy; the Bryce Report, and similar French reports.

“The greater part of the devilry in the Vosges seems to have been the work of the Bavarians. At Gerbiviller, they proceeded to avenge their losses on the civilian population. They burst into their houses, shooting, stabbing, and capturing the inhabitants—sparking neither age nor sex—and burning and sacking the houses. A woman aged 78 was shot and her body afterwards shamefully profaned.”

—Official French Report on German atrocities, January 1915

A Belgian farmhouse on the outskirts of Antwerp burns, 1914.

A French nurse guides soldiers blinded on the battlefield.
• Battle for the mind of the United States; the German disadvantage in that field, because of broken communications and "own goals."

• Wellington House and Allied influence in the United States; later claims by Harold Lasswell and US isolationists, "the problem this gave to Britain in 1939-41"; Hitler's view of the past—and future of propaganda, but the changing impact of the word.

Anti-War Movements

• Lenin's "revolutionary defeatism" but its limitation to Russia.

• There were only limited numbers of protesters and difficulty being heard in the press or on the streets; some governments directed efforts to prevent meetings.

• Pacifists were in conflict with growing state control, censorship and sometimes imprisonment.

• Discipline and military executions in the armies; how the armies differed in this: 300 British military executions, but this was only a fraction of those condemned by court martial.

• Development of the idea and language of pacifism, but the very limited involvement of the Churches, which mainly backed the war.

• The hard life of the pacifist—how to prove your convictions? Ambulance driving and stretcher-bearers; Lytton Strachey offers to interpose his body; establishing their anti-war credentials for the 1930s and later.

• The central fact was of continued public support for war, as the key explanation for the lack of resistance, and the limited need for propaganda to sustain this.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Consider

1. Why did so few people oppose the war compared to the tens of millions who went to fight?

2. How important was the Great War as a staging post towards gender equality?

3. Consider the Great War's significance in the history of state propaganda.

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

1. usplessons.aug.com/captbarr/ferbar.html - Web page by Captain Barbara A. Wilson, USAF (Ret.) entitled "WWI: Thirty Thousand Women Were There."


3. www.bbc.co.uk/history/wwone/shellshock_01.shtml - BBC site on World War I. This page is an article (with links) by Professor Joanna Bourke entitled "Shell Shock during World War One."


Lecture 6: The Western Front in 1916

Before beginning this lecture you may want to...
Read Martin Middlebrook's *The First Day on the Somme, 1st July 1916*.

Introduction:
The year 1916 began with high hopes for the Western allies: this would be the year in which Britain would finally field comparable numbers of troops to France; the Allies expected that they would together show that they had learned lessons from the first eighteen months of war, and break through the German lines. The reality was therefore a crushing disappointment, with the French at Verdun and the British on the Somme each suffering massive casualties. This “war of attrition” may though also have begun in 1916 to wear down the German army in a way that contributed to eventual victory.

Issues...
1. Verdun, Germany’s “mincing machine” for the French army.
2. The Battle of the Somme, the worst day in British military history.
3. The onset of war-weariness.

The Allied Plan for 1916
- A new British commander, Douglas Haig, having replaced Sir John French.
- Haig’s reputation, his critics and his defenders; his strengths and his limitations as a commander.
- A coordinated Anglo-French attack planned for the Somme area, a “breakthrough battle” to win the war, not a “wearing out” fight as it later became.
- Planning and training, accumulating masses of stores and munitions.
- Blooding Kitchener’s volunteer armies; the “Pals” battalions and the impact of losses on particular British towns like Accrington: of 720 Accrington “Pals,” 584 were killed, missing or wounded on 1 July.

Verdun: Germany Strikes First
- Germany’s plan for 1916: to attack in the West (unlike 1915), but in a geographically limited way at a psychological focus of French history and identity; a battle to wreck the French army.
- Verdun was as a “mincing machine” for the French army, battered from three sides but unable to withdraw; continuous fighting from 21 February to 18 December.
- French heroism under Philippe Petain, the national spirit involved in the battle and the forty miles of the “voie sacrée”; “ils ne passeront.”
- Colossal French losses (315,000 men) and damage to the morale of the survivors, but Verdun held, a big advantage to national morale.
- Also big German losses (285,000 men), and sacking of General Falkenhayn.
- Emergence of a military-dominated German government under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, their complementary strengths made them a formidable pairing.
- Heavy pressure therefore on Britain to start the Somme attack early and now (almost) alone.

The Battle of the Somme
- Haig wanted to fight in Flanders (because of his retreat and supply routes), but agreed to a joint Somme attack under political pressure; then French losses at Verdun added more pressure, so the attack started early and training was curtailed.

British General Douglas Haig (1861-1928)
Some disagreement between Generals Haig and Rawlinson over details, and Haig did not insist on his view; reliance on artillery to clear the way and a walking attack.

Artillery warned the enemy, but failed to clear the way; deep German dugouts in the chalk of the Somme, and so great carnage was done by the machine guns.

1 July 1916, the worst day in British military history: 20,000 killed, 57,000 casualties, but few gains; some first-day targets were taken only several weeks later; failure to reinforce success on the right flank, but little immediate awareness of the disaster.

Renewed attacks, especially in September, and the battle drags on to November, mostly not like the early July fights; the learning processes went on though and there was the first use of tanks.

Running down to exhaustion on both sides by winter.

Much disputed casualty figures (and they are hard to compile and compare), but both sides lost about 600,000 men in the fighting; German losses in numbers were especially in irreplaceable trained men.

Were 1916’s disastrous battles therefore a key component of winning in 1917?

A New Mood from 1916 Onward

No later year was as optimistic as early 1916 had been; one need now was just to fight on, but with decreasing hope of a decisive result; soldiers increasingly cynical and brutalised by their army experience.

“I don’t want to be a soldier,
I don’t want to go to war,
I’d rather stay at home,
Around the streets to roam,
And live on the earnings of a lady typist.
I don’t want a bayonet in my belly,
I don’t want my privates shot away.
I’d rather stay in England,
In merry, merry England,
And fornicate my bleeding life away.”

—Soldiers’ song, 1916

The predominance now was irony and cynicism, even if not just about 1916; a mistake though to see this as a rejection of the war by the soldiers.

Peace feelers and war aims were in debate in late 1916.

The accumulating visual evidence of modern warfare, soldiers resembling characters in science fiction, dehumanised and brutalised.

This produces the artistic and literary response which we’ll examine in lecture 8, but for now notice an increasing sense of both the war and the world having less and less meaning.

“No more painters, no more writers, no more musicians, no more sculptors, no more religions, no more republicans, no more royalists, no more imperialists, no more anarchists, no more socialists, no more bolsheviks, no more proletariat, no more democrats, no more bourgeois, no more aristocrats, no more weapons, no more police, no more countries, enough of all these imbecilities. No more of anything, nothing, nothing, nothing.”

—Tristan Tzara,
The Manifesto of the Dada Movement, 1916

Tristan Tzara
(1896-1963)
Consider

1. Was there any realistic alternative to the way in which British generals fought the Battle of the Somme and French generals the Battle of Verdun?
2. What was Germany still hoping to achieve in the war by 1916?
3. Why was peace not seriously discussed in the deadlock years of 1916-17?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

1. [www.pbs.org/greatwar/maps/maps_verdun.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/maps/maps_verdun.html) - PBS site on the Great War. This page covers the Battle of Verdun and includes links to a map and commentary by two historians.

2. [www.worldwar1.com/heritage/fmhaig.htm](http://www.worldwar1.com/heritage/fmhaig.htm) - The Great War Society web page on Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, “Great Captain or Donkey?”


Lecture 7: The Eastern Front

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Norman Stone's *The Eastern Front, 1914-17*.

Introduction:

In the Western world, it is easy to underestimate the impact of the campaigns in Eastern Europe in both world wars, but especially for 1914-18. These campaigns were thought on an even more epic scale, and caused as in 1914-15 almost unimaginable numbers of casualties. Though Russia was most heavily defeated, leading to the 1917 revolutions and her withdrawal from the war, the bruising battles of 1914-17 in the East also helped to wear down the German army, and to accelerate the collapse of the centuries-old Austrian Empire.

Issues . . .

1. The different geography of the East and the different war that it produced.
3. The defeat and surrender of Russia.

The Opening Balance in the East

- Geography of the Eastern fronts, imposed logistical constraints and fighting conditions, especially east of the River Vistula.
- Historical background and racial expectations of a German-Slav conflict.
- Russia was now free from any Japanese threat to its Eastern side.
• Comparing the Russian and German armies; Russia's war economics in myth and reality.
• Austria-Hungary as a German ally—or as an incubus?
• German planning had concentrated on the West; France begging for Russian help early, so Russia obliged to drive West early and often.

The Manoeuvre Battles of Autumn 1914

• Initial plans and manoeuvres; the German commander falls back and is sacked.
• Colonel Max Hofmann, already planning for an attack, is joined by Hindenburg and Ludendorff as commanders.
• Drawing in the Russians and enveloping them at Tannenburg; Russians lose over 100,000 men.
• Repeating the same successful formula at the Masurian Lakes: Russia loses 145,000 men; German losses only 20,000 in both campaigns; together a spectacular military victory.
• But Austria is defeated in Gallician campaign to the south and pushed back 100 miles (with 350,000 casualties), creating a threat to Galicia and German industry in Silesia.
• New German army is thrown into battle to rescue Austria and stabilised the front, but no overall strategic advantage for Germany.

Hard-Slog Fighting in 1915 and 1916

• In 1914, Germany had knocked neither France nor Russia out of the war, and now decided to stand mainly on the defensive in the West and try to demolish Russia first as the weaker enemy.
• Russia was already short of weapons and munitions (hence the Anglo-French Gallipoli attack to open a supply line): weakening effectiveness of Russian forces, but shortages also an alibi for command failures and influenced by administrative weakness.

• Germans advanced in the North and then broke through in the Centre in 1915, took Warsaw and occupied most of modern Poland; overall two million Russian casualties (half of them POWs).
• In response, the Tsar assumed direct command of Russian armies, a dangerous policy of last resort.
• Russia was forced in 1916 to attack early, to assist France and Italy, and threw everything into it; a well-prepared and equipped attack under Brusilov, Russia's best general.
• Brusilov's successful offensive advanced 40-100 miles, forcing transfer of 15 German divisions from the West, and taking lots of prisoners (Russia captured more Germans than Britain and France together).
• Months of brutal battles over front of hundreds of miles for seventeen continuous weeks; but a million German/Austrian casualties, and the Austrians now incapable of further offensive action.
• But also a million Russian casualties, added to earlier losses, and lost weaponry and trained soldiers which were now irreplaceable; some army units were now untrained peasants without rifles, shoes or adequate uniforms.
• The inflationary crisis, the peasant farmers' response and the break-up of army and society: George Orwell said that a war is like a "speak your weight" machine, and only those who are fit and muscular can work it.

Wars in the Balkans

• There were Balkan wars of 1912-14 which spilled over into the Great War.
• Austria's attacks on Serbia in 1914, all repelled successfully.
• Bulgaria joins the war on Germany's side in October; allied forces landed in Macedonia, and reinforced after Gallipoli failure, but made little impact.
• Germany's need for supplies from Middle East by railway through the Balkans, so organised a joint attack on Serbia, which was overrun, Autumn 1915.
• Romania (1916) and then Greece (1917) joined the war on the allied side; Russia was defeated by Germany and her allies in Autumn 1916, with no possibility of allied aid getting through and Russia by then too weak to assist.
• Rising aspirations of Austria’s subject peoples; Masaryk and the American Czechs, Seton-Watson, the “South Slavs” and the British Foreign Office, allied war aims now involving self-determination in Central Europe, even ahead of a peace conference.

• Withdrawal of German and Austrian forces to more crucial war fronts allowed the Allies to defeat Bulgaria in September 1918.

Russia’s Defeat and Surrender

• Growing disillusion and economic hardship in Russia: the Russian army begins to disintegrate during 1916-17.

• Overall 10 million Russians mobilised, three-quarters of them becoming war casualties: 1.7 million killed, 5 million wounded, 2.5 million POWs or “missing.”

• Huge civilian suffering too; severe shortages of food and fuel leading to bread riots.

• The February Revolution and the advent of democratic government, Kerensky becomes war leader, but it is an unstable situation because of the growing power of the “soviets.”

• Kerensky keeps up relations with the Western allies; Russian army commanders insist on keeping the war going, the Russian army’s final campaign in July 1917, an initial success, but then further defeats, and the army then almost ceased to exist—the world of Dr Zhivago.

• Lenin travels in the “sealed train,” and his arrival in Petrograd at the Finland Station.

• The October Revolution was a coup rather than a popular uprising, but here was growing anarchy across Russia’s regions; descent into a four-year civil war.

• The Bolsheviks publish the secret diplomatic correspondence; allied embarrassment concerning their democratic credentials, especially regarding the Treaty of London.

• Remaining Western troops must be extricated; the continuing issue of intervention against the Bolshevik regime; the amazing escape of the Czech legion via Siberia and the United States.

• The Russian peace decree opens negotiations with Germany, but Germany rapidly advanced again when Russia did not accept Germany’s first proposals.

• The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, March; terms of surrender and the impact on the allies: Russia lost a third of its population, more than half its industry; Germany anyway occupied the Ukraine and stayed there.

“NO ONE IS A MORE ARDENT REPUBLICAN THAN I, BUT WE MUST BIDE OUR TIME. WE SHALL HAVE OUR REPUBLIC, BUT WE MUST WIN THE WAR. THEN WE CAN DO WHAT WE WILL…”

ALEXANDER KERENSKY
15 MARCH 1917

“In the middle of April 1917, the Germans took a sombre decision. . . . They were in the mood that had unleashed unlimited submarine warfare. . . . They had employed poison gas on the largest scale and had invented the flammenwerfer. Nevertheless, it was with a sense of awe that they turned upon Russia the most grisly of all weapons. They transported Lenin in a sealed truck, like a plague bacillus into Russia.”

~Winston Churchill
FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Consider

1. How far was the Bolshevik Revolution a consequence of the Great War?
2. Consider the impact of the Great War on different nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
3. How important was the fighting on the Eastern and Southern Fronts to the eventual outcome of the Great War?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

1. www.historylearning.co.uk/battle_of_tannenburg.htm - History Learning Site page on the Battle of Tannenburg.

Recorded Books


To order Recorded Books, call 1-800-638-1304 or go to www.modernscholar.com. Books are also available for rental.

Lecture 8: A Literary and Artistic War

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Reed Morris Eckseins’ Rites of Spring: the Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age.

Introduction:

The Great War took place during a period of ferment in the arts, the birth of what has become known as “modernism,” but its exact relationship with the modern movement has been much debated. Artists and writers were closely involved in the presentation of the war to ordinary people in their own country and to neutrals. Among younger people, poets and painters who had directly experienced the war as soldiers felt obliged to use their skills to convey its horrors to civilians, and the impact of their poems and paintings has had a lasting impact on the war’s popular image to this day.

Issues . . .

1. The place of the Great War in the birth of modernism.
2. Writers and artists as propagandists for wartime governments.
3. The painting and poetry of protest.

The Great War and the Birth of “Modernism”

- Did the Great War begin the modernist world? Not as simple a relationship as sometimes claimed.
- A great ferment existed already in the arts by 1910: the post-Impressionists and cubists, the Russian Ballet and its music, the early James Joyce novels.
- The historic scale of the change, as seen at the time: “On or about 29th December 1910, human nature changed,” said Virginia Woolf.
- Great controversy: hatred of modern art forms by conservatives, riots in the Paris Opera at the premiere of “The Rite of Spring” (1913) as uniting several modernist art forms; this foreshadows the post-war dystopia in art between highbrow and mass culture.

Houses in Paris by Juan Gils, 1911
Photography and Cinema
- Frustrations of military security; armies' gradually aware of the press including cameramen for morale, maintaining support for the army.
- What to see and how to photograph it? Censorship of the most horrific and the most interesting, such as corpses; double standards in propaganda photographs.
- Cinema as propaganda—the most recent art form and the most popular—offered even greater difficulties of access, so recourse to faking and re-enactment. Did it matter?
- The impact of *The Battle of the Somme* (1916) and its limitations; hard to repeat the impact with later films.
- Hollywood involved from 1917; Britain employed D.W. Griffith to fictionalise the war in *Hearts of the World*; embarrassment after the return to peace.
- Busby Berkeley was a US Army propagandist, preparing his later work.
- Cinema as a two-way mirror for society, reflected in downbeat later images of the war after 1918.

Painting the War
- Like photography, painting was hard to do at the front.
- But painting and sculpture were the traditional way to celebrating war; state sponsorship of war artists, and subsequent employment of sculptors.
- Censorship remained, for the duration: as in Nevinson's *Paths of Glory*.
- Irony and alienation of younger radical painters, often in the pictures' titles: *Harvest of Battle* (Nevinson); *We are Making a New World* (Paul Nash).
- But what to see and what to paint: there were still traditionalist approaches, with horses, portraits, ships and air battles.
- Complications of the modernist approach produced a convergence of styles between radicals and conservatives: Nevinson's *Soldiers Returning to the Trenches*.
- Evocative use of colour—or lack of colour—but hampered by lack of sound and smell in representing the actuality.
- Sometimes the most effective are the most natural: John Singer Sargent's *Gassed*.

**By 1914 virtually everything that can take shelter under the broad and rather undefined canopy of “modernism” was already in place:**
- cubism; expressionism; futurism; pure abstraction in painting; functionalism and flight from ornament in architecture; the abandonment of tonality in music; the break with tradition in literature.”

—Eric Hobsbawm, Historian

- What is 'modernism'? The denial of evolutionary change in favour of disruption; denial of progress and civilisation in favour of violence and shock; denial of an artistic elite.
- Futurism and vorticism involve the worship of violence, seeing machinery as a primeval force; Blast and the later career of Wyndham Lewis in *Blasting and Bombardering*.
- The war is seen as a discontinuity in human history, a change in human nature: "Never such innocence again?" War's visual equivalent of pre-war imaginings: explosions, mutilations, inhuman and unnatural man.
- So, if war did not launch modernism, it certainly did reinforce and accelerate it; war was, as Trotsky put it, "the locomotive of history."

**Literary Propaganda**
- Total, popular war involved all sectors of each community, including artists and writers.
- Historians issued their manifestos; counter-attacks and growing estrangements; matched by the churches, trade unions, socialists, and musicians: promoting musical and literary allies at the expense of enemies.
- The British writers' declaration makes an international impact; selling and giving the work of their pens; Wellington House and the processes of deception, using shadow publishers, press networks, and "personal" letters to friends.
- Role of the biggest names: Hardy, Galsworthy, and James; but also popular authors like Conan Doyle (and the later Hollywood versions) and John Buchan.
War Poets and “Anti-War” Poetry

- Writing and reading poetry was then an essential part of general education, but poetry had traditionally been used to explain and historicise war, from Homer onward.
- The inherited images of war were of ennobling sacrifice, conditioning young men before 1914.
- Early war poets continuing that approach, classically the sonnets of Rupert Brooke. His death and secular canonisation important in 1915; continuing fame long after 1918.

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware, Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air, Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shod away, A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given; Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day; And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness. In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

~Charles Hamilton Sorley

- But fashion soon changed, and became less positive about killing and death.
- Unlike other arts, poetry in the trenches was though easy, and quick; Charles Sorley's final poem was in his pocket when he was killed in 1915.
- Growing alienation of the younger men, mainly junior officers concerned about personal responsibility; also personal revulsion at what they saw and experienced: these were often men who were very good soldiers themselves, who had "earned the right to speak."
- Graves, Sassoon and Owen wrote poetry as protest against what exactly? Evidence of some alienation, but what is the moral?
- Sassoon’s war protest in 1917, his hospitalisation and return to war in 1918.
- Later images of war heavily influenced by the artists and the poets, above all in the English-speaking world by Wilfred Owen.

Sonnet

When you see millions of the mouthless dead
Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
Say not soft things as other men have said,
That you'll remember. For you need not so.
Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,
"Yet many a better one has died before."
Then, scanning all the over-crowded mass, should you
Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
Great death has made all his for evermore.

~Charles Hamilton Sorley

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle? Only the monstrous anger of the guns. Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle Can pattering out their hasty orisons. No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells; Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells; And bugles calling them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all? Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes. The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall; Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds, And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

~Wilfred Owen
Lecture 9: 1917 in the West

Before beginning this lecture you may want to...

Read Lyn Macdonald’s They Called it Passchendaele.

Introduction:
The year 1917 was the grimmest year of the war for Britain, France, and Germany, with the high hopes and war enthusiasm of 1914 long behind them, and the prospect of peace and victory apparently as far away as ever. It was the year in which the Russian army disintegrated and the French army mutinied, while the British and Germans continued to slog it out around Passchendaele, possibly the grimmest combat of all. It was also the year in which some spectacular successes took place, as at Arras, Vimy Ridge, and Cambrai. Russia’s surrender allowed Germany to concentrate everything in the West, while America’s entry on the Allied side promised fresh reserves of men, munitions, and economic power to ensure Germany’s defeat. The year 1918 would therefore bring the return of drama and excitement.

Issues...
1. The failure to make a compromise peace.
2. French army mutinies.
3. The Battle of Passchendaele.

Pacemaking Efforts
- Extraordinary weakness of peace movements in all the fighting countries explains reactions to Lord Lansdowne’s peace letter.
- Outside pressures to make peace, mediation by President Wilson and the Pope.
- The impact of internal propaganda on images of the enemy.
- The combatant powers’ reactions to the peace feelers; German war aims were not compatible with the minimum demands of the allies.
- The overall difficulty of making a compromise peace in a “total war.”
“Frocks and Brasshats”: Politicians and Their Generals

- Civilian governments were increasingly pressured by politicians and the press to get a victory without further delay, and increasingly resentful of generals who did not deliver one.
- The constitutional issue of civilian control was resolved very differently in the different countries.
- Generals, armies and their political supporters.
- Emergence of patriotic coalitions occurred in Britain and France, demonising political opponents and widening political barriers; Clemenceau was the “tiger” and “pere la victoire.”
- The “Maurice debate” in March 1919 in Britain; preparing to make every Member of Parliament line up for or against the war.

Nivelle’s Offensive

- Robert Nivelle’s youth, his Verdun record and brassy rhetoric were seductive to politicians seeking a quick victory.
- Nivelle’s concept of the secret of military success had its roots in French military thinking and strategic doctrine in 1914—artillery fire, speed, surprise, and elan.
- The tragic outcome in practice in the Aisne campaign of April-May. Over 100,000 killed, though Germany again lost heavily too.

The French Army Mutinies

- Fragile condition of several armies by 1917; Russian mutinies, wholesale Czech desertions from Austrian forces; Italian units fleeing when attacked.
- There was soldier resentment of “them” on the home front and in high command: French soldiers had the idea “bouurreage de crame.”
- The French mutinies had a near decisive impact, but also note their limitations as evidence of anti-war feelings.
- Some 23,000 found guilty of mutiny, only fifty-five executed.
- Pétain restores order and a more humane regime in the French army, but at a price.

“I WILL FIGHT BEFORE PARIS, I WILL FIGHT IN PARIS, I WILL FIGHT BEHIND PARIS”
- Clemenceau

“The memory of his soldiers’ faces at Verdun never ceased to haunt him. He could never pass an ambulance without a tightening of the throat.”

~Correlli Barnett

Passchendaele (The Third Battle of Ypres)

- Early British limited successes in 1917: Canadians at Vimy Ridge, Arras and Messines as examples of the learning of lessons (for example in ranging by sound, and in careful plans for limited operations).
- Haig planned a main battle in Flanders, but had difficulty with political support. He was again forced to start early to rescue the French army after the mutinies.
- Mining and the early successes (July 31 to August). A huge set-piece attack.

“From far and near the ceaseless hammer-stroke of the great guns making the sky red and the restless, with tongues of leaping fire and bringing unseen, unimaginable destruction to the masses of men hidden in the dark woods and trenches.”

~The Times, London

- But then terrible weather and “the mud of Flanders” took over; a knock-out battle again became a wearing-out fight; the long slog through to November when the Australian’s took Passchendaele village, which did not then exist.

“They died in hell (they called it Passchendaele).”

~Siegfried Sassoon

- Growing lack of political backing for the army command: Robertson sacked but Haig survived with political and royal backing; Lloyd George then denied Haig manpower for further attacks.

A Changing Battlefield—Changing Armies

- The battle of Cambrai, November 1917, a glimpse of the future, but early hopes were dashed.
- Changing infantry tactics and arms, the all-arms solution, and battlefield strategies of limited proses and flexibility.
Scores of British tanks are readied for battle at Cambrai.

- The air war developing into a serious campaign in 1917: reconnaissance, dog-fights and bombing factories; hero figures like Ball and Richthofen (both killed).
- War weariness all round, but little willingness to compromise as 1918 offered new hope to both sides.
- Nevertheless, general expectation of a war going on into at least 1919. Hard now to imagine how it could ever end.

(Left) Captain Albert Ball (1896-1917), a World War I British flying ace, was credited with 44 "kills" by the time of his own death in 1917. (Right) German fighter ace Manfred von Richthofen (1892-1918), known as the "Red Baron," shot down eighty allied planes.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Consider

1. Why did soldiers not mutiny more often when subjected to the intolerable strains of 1916-17?
2. How far do the battles of 1917 indicate that generals were learning from their mistakes?
3. How did soldiers in the various armies view the civilians in their countries in these middle years of the war?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

3. www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_winter_13_hated.html - PBS website on the Great War. This page is a short article by Jay Winter of Cambridge University on the mobilisation of hatred.
Lecture 10: The War at Sea

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Richard Hough's *The Great War at Sea, 1914-18*.

Introduction:

The naval aspects of the Great War defied expectations, and proved in particular a disappointment to the British as the strongest naval power, for there was no decisive fleet action to settle the sea war in a day. The one major clash of the British and German battle fleets was indecisive, and smaller actions provided no obvious successes. Meanwhile the advent of the submarine and its active use by Germany against merchant shipping threatened Britain's economic survival. In 1917-18, though, the British and Americans defeated the submarine threat and won the war at sea, with crucial consequences for the overall outcome of the war.

Issues . . .

1. Destruction of the German navy outside European waters.
2. The Battle of Jutland, a messy draw rather than a decisive sea battle.
3. Starving the enemy into submission: German submarines and the allied blockade.

The British Way in Warfare

- Two centuries had marked the "blue water" theory of British security.
- The "two-power standard" and the Anglo-German naval race.
- Modernising the navies: Dreadnoughts, firepower, and oil-power.
- British fear was of invasion, and as an island, of the long unprotected coast. Only the Royal Navy could "lose the war in an afternoon."
- Expectations in 1914 were still based on historic sense of British naval tradition, even German naval specialists expecting a decisive battle at sea.

- Ferrying the army to France and keeping the ferry lanes secure was a much underestimated part of the war.

Surface Raiders

- German warships were hunted down around the world's oceans by the end of 1914, but problems remained as in 1939-40 tracking down small groups of ships in the worldwide oceans.
  - Escape of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* to Turkey.
  - The von Spee squadron, produced the battles of Coronel (British defeat under Admiral Cradock) and the Falkland Islands (decisive British victory under Admiral Sturdee).
  - The *Emden* sinks fifteen ships and then is run aground.
  - Rounding up or internning the German merchant fleet, the German economy pegged back to Central and Eastern Europe, making it increasingly dependent on supplies from the South East.

Main Fleet Actions

- German caution, the hit and run tactic as at Scarborough; Admiral Mahan's doctrine of the "fleet in being" is reinforced by the Kaiser's personal caution.
- Skirmishes at Heligoland (German cruisers sunk) and the Dogger Bank (March 1915—narrow German escape); but also British losses to submarines (three old cruisers sunk in one attack off the Dutch coast). Increasing irritation with the British Navy.
- Accidental collision of fleets at Jutland, British losses and no conclusion, but poor British tactics and poor firing too.

"There seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today!"—Admiral David Beatty

- The heroism of 16-year-old boy sailor, Jack Cornwell VC in *HMS Chester*.
- Germany wins the public relations war after Jutland, partly because it defied expectations.
- But the German High Seas Fleet never fights again.
- Starvation and mutiny in the German fleet in 1918; scuttling the ships at Scapa Flow in 1919.
Submarines

- One of two feared recent developments pre-1914, the other being torpedo boats, but their "destroyers" were too powerful; no real effect in this war of air power at sea, though warships did have spotter aeroplanes for reconnaissance.
- Britain's vulnerability to blockade led to pre-war efforts to outlaw or limit submarines in international conventions, but this was never effective.
- Ineffectiveness of "cruiser rules" in the submarine war, confusion as to what was and what was not legal and morally acceptable.
- Germany gradually prioritises submarine warfare, especially after the battle of Jutland.
- Weakness of the submarine unless it attacks by stealth; Allied use of Q ships and the arming of merchant ships; ramming submarines and the fate of Captain Fryatt.
  - Germany resorts to unrestricted submarine warfare despite US protests; 1915, halted after the sinking of the Lusitania, but restarted in early 1917 and very effective.
  - Growing British shipping losses in 1916-17 and fears of a starving population.

"Can the army win the war before the Navy loses it?"

- Admiral Lord Fisher

- Defeat of the submarines through convoy system, better escort warships and tactics, British and American cooperation (threat to US troop convoys too); half of all Germany's submarines were sunk during the war.

Blockade of Germany

- This was also a part of British naval tradition, as in Napoleonic times (also a time of conflict with the United States over neutrals' rights).
- Searching for "contraband" was in accordance with international conventions (but very hard to define, as in the Lusitania case).
- Stepping up the pressure by blocking all goods was deferred as retaliation and self-defence against unrestricted submarines.
- Gradual effects on German economy, rations and will to fight; the troops in Operation Michael and their rations.
- Double standards in British defence of blockade while denouncing submarines?

Admiral John A Fisher

(1841-1920)

- The Zeebrugge raid of April 1918, taking the war to the submarines and showing some dash, very good for morale back home.
- How could Germany build enough submarines with the British blockade in force?

A German U-boat surfaces in rough seas in the North Atlantic.
Consider

1. Was the British naval tradition still relevant in an age of twentieth-century battleships?
2. Given the risk of driving America into the Allied camp, why did Germany risk unrestricted submarine warfare?
3. Why was there no “North Sea Trafalgar” in 1914-18?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

1. www.gwpda.org/naval/r000000.htm - This page covers the War at Sea through页面 links that thoroughly cover the topic.
3. www.westernfront.co.uk/thegreatwar/articles/research/effectbritishnaval-blockade.htm - The Western Front Association website. This page features a contributed article by Dr. David Payne (a retired medical scientist from the World Health Organisation) entitled “The Effect of the British Naval and Economic Blockade on the Western Front in the Great War.”

American Neutrality in Tradition and in Fact

- The United States was not overly involved in “old world” diplomacy in the nineteenth century, it began to acquire a large Navy late in the century, but still had only a small army, and made few efforts to expand it until actually at war in 1917.
- Memories of 1812-14 produced a determination to protect neutrals’ rights to sail the seas freely, in US ships and in other ships too.
- America deplored the war in 1914, but stood aside; promoting food relief and attempts at mediation.
- The superior morality and separateness of being “too proud to fight,” as Wilson put it in 1915; something similar to Ireland’s neutrality claim in 1939-1945.
• Herbert Hoover and famine relief in Belgium, a vital task for a neutral United States.

• William Jennings Bryan was a pacifist as Secretary of State, and Wilson had great deep reluctance to take the country into the actual war, despite allied and interventionist pressure; Wilson's firm personality and self-belief was an important factor when assailed by people like Theodore Roosevelt who were very pro-Allied.

• The continuing Mexican complications following the Revolution involved Pershing and a good deal of the United States army in 1915-16.

American Sympathies and American Economics

• Most Americans who had a clear view backed Britain and France rather than Germany, but worried about Russia. Far more wanted to stay out anyway.

• Wilson is re-elected in 1916 as the man who had kept the United States out of the war, clearly a popular stance with the electors.

• Unequal trading rights for the two belligerents reflected the unequal balance of sea power and the closer American economic links with the United Kingdom than with Germany.

• Substantial economic benefits accrued to the United States from the war in 1914-17, as the allies bought everything she could produce; extensive purchasing and commissioning machines.

• American provided much funding for Britain's war, and Britain used its credit for her allies: over the war years, the United States loaned $9.5 billion to the allies ($4.6 billion of it to Britain; Britain loaned $8.7 billion to the other allies).

• Ruthless sale of British assets accumulated over decades, and funds expertly raised by J.P. Morgan, but British credit was exhausted by early 1917, and loans were only possible with the United States government backing: at this point the United States actually joined the war, but British economic dependence on the United States was by then huge, and America had thus become the world's economic superpower by 1918.

• There was a carry-over of the debt issue into the 1920s when Reparations failed to deliver the goods: "They hired the money, didn't they?" said President Calvin Coolidge, in 1925.

"It was disclosed [to me] that financial disaster to all the European Allies is imminent unless the United States Government advances to the British enough money to pay for British purchases in the United States as they fall due. . . . Unless we come to their rescue we are all in danger of disaster."

—Walter Hines Page, US ambassador in London, to US Secretary of State, 28 June 1917

The Lusitania and the German Submarine issue

• Sea war inevitably involved neutrals directly, by killing their citizens and curtailing their trading rights; the United States protests to the United Kingdom as well as to Germany.

• British propaganda in the United States was highly professional and very effective, making expert use of the submarine issue to draw America into a mood of conflict.
The background of Japanese-Mexican entanglements, and American suspicions.

Arthur Zimmerman had great limitations as an "expert" on the United States: deciding to go broke in the New World as well as on the seas.

Germany resumes submarine attacks and the United States breaks off relations.

Zimmerman's telegram intercepted and fed through diplomatic channels to Wilson, who publishes it to reinforce support for arming US ships.

Mixed reactions until Zimmerman confirms its truth. Why?

Outrage arises in the United States: Congress, press, and people; war declared on 6 April; Senate voted 82-6, House 373-50. Great enthusiasm for the war.

"President Wilson told the United States on Monday that war was necessary. ... The effect of this speech was electrical. Yesterday the United States was distracted by the cross-currents of opinion, prejudice, and tradition. Today, the tide of national thought sets in a steady stream of patriotism."

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On 16 January 1917, the German Foreign Minister, Arthur Zimmerman sent the following telegram to Count von Bernstorff, the German ambassador in the United States:

Most Secret

For Your Excellency's personal information and to be handed on to the Imperial Minister in Mexico

We intend to begin unrestricted submarine warfare on the first of February. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of an alliance on the following basis: Make war together, make peace together, generous financial support, and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement detail is left to you.

Inform the President [of Mexico] of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves.

Please call the President's attention to the fact that the unrestricted employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England to make peace within a few months. Acknowledge receipt.

Zimmerman
FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Consider

1. How far did the Lusitania incident affect America’s drift towards involvement in the Great War?
2. How effective were British and German propaganda in the United States, 1914-17?
3. Why was Woodrow Wilson “too proud to fight”?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit


Lecture 12: Germany Almost Wins the War in 1918

Before beginning this lecture you may want to ...
Read Martin Middlebrook’s *The Kaiser’s Battle: 21st March 1918.*

Introduction:

With remarkable suddenness, the Great War shifted from boredom and stalemate to movement and excitement in spring 1918. Between March and June the German army broke through the allied lines in the West and advanced continuously, once again coming within sight of overall victory, as in 1914. This was though a deliberately organised last gamble for victory, and when the allies managed to hang on, “backs to the wall,” as the German advance gradually petered out, midsummer 1918 allowed a rapid swing back towards allied victory.

Issues ...

1. The war returns to mobility after three years of stasis.
2. Germany almost wins the war in Operation Michael.
3. The Allies just hold on; Germany’s last chance to win has gone.

Strategic Overview: The Start of 1918

- Italians defeated at Caporetto in October 1917 and extensive German-Austrian advance into Italy (as in Ernest Hemingway’s, *A Farewell to Arms*); but the heavy cost to the Austrians too, and the continuing high war in the Dolomites.
- In early 1918, Italy, Turkey, and Austria-Hungary were all near to exhaustion, and only being propped up by their allies; British and French troops stabilised the Italian army front.
- Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918; Russia out of the war allows the transfer of entire German armies to the West, though German forces continue to occupy the Ukraine in 1918, to ensure food supplies to starving Germany.
- Germany nevertheless being steadily weakened by the economic block-
ade, the best rations still kept for the army, but soldiers on leave returned shocked by what they had seen of conditions at home, memorably captured in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

American forces were gradually beginning to build up in France, and starting to take over parts of the allied line; Pershing's insistence on a separate US army, but the costs in re-learning old lessons: a much shorter learning curve? US army command in existence in France only from Summer 1918.

France too was near to exhaustion after heavy losses for forty-two consecutive months of fighting and the French army very fragile after the 1917 mutinies, still able to defend, but uncertain in attack.

Britain as well as America took over more of the front line from France, but Lloyd George no longer ready to trust Haig's judgement; had failed to remove him, so starved him of reserves to prevent him from going over onto the attack until US forces were ready in large numbers (600,000 British troops retained in Britain). Crack Australian forces also being rusted over winter 1917 at the urgent request of their government. So the dangerous point when weaker British forces held a longer line, which was just about where the Germans did attack.

So, there was a once-for-all chance for Germany to break through in the West while it could fight on one front only, and before American forces were there in overwhelming numbers. An early attack was consciously seen by Ludendorff as a great gamble, as the submarine gamble had been in 1917.

Germany's only chance now to win the war was to go for broke.

**Operation Michael**

- Germany intending a breakthrough battle for the first time since 1914, and therefore had to put into practice all the lessons learned.

- Only a short hurricane bombardment is used just before the attack, so ground not destroyed; use of selected “storm-trooper” units to make the assault. Using “infiltration tactics,” probing for weaknesses and passing on around strongly defended points, reinforcing success rather than as so often reinforcing areas of failure. Abandoning the frontal, linear approach to battle for something nearer to the blitzkrieg of 1940, though still an infantry tactic and so relatively slow.

- The attack nevertheless foreseen, but all the British army could do was to wait: this is the plot of the play and film, *Journey's End*.

**14th March**: “Unusual enemy activity reported and the Battalion 'stood to' from 4 to 8 am at Battle Positions, but nothing occurred.”

**15th March**: “Quiet day in the line but considerable uneasiness by the Staff as to enemy's intention to attack.”

**16th to 20th March**: “Uneasiness continues.”

**21st March**: “Desperate enemy offensive commences...”

—War diary of 1st Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry

**First attacks in March shattered the British Fifth Army, and forced it well back, re-taking all the ground surrendered by Germany in 1915-17 at such cost to the allies; then re-directing the attack elsewhere to keep the allied reserves off balance.**

**Steady German advances continued for three months, gradually leading to fears of actual defeat.**

**Bolting the American forces: 2nd and 3rd Divisions are used in the Marne sector (plugging a gap despite the desire to fight as separate units); capture of Cerny by the US 1st Division. The first US offensive operation of the war.**

**Allied Responses**

- Allies at last appointed a Commander-in-Chief, Ferdinand Foch, an exponent of the attack, but generally respected in all three armies; helpful for co-ordination and avoidance of panic as all were being defeated and pushed back, a dangerous time.

- Allied political leadership was strongly entrenched in their own legislatures and hardly threatened by the near-defeat. Clemenceau in France, Lloyd George in England (though George had to see off a rather nasty debate on his own record).
• Germany continues to advance, but heavy German losses (casualties March to June were 800,000). Germans now had no real reserves and several salients to defend. Lloyd George had now agreed to all available men being sent to France. France found more men from industry, and the United States’ force build-up accelerated, too.

• German advance gradually ran out of steam as surviving troops were exhausted; but also depressed by extensive supplies captured as they advanced, compared to what they knew of the scarcities in Germany (not unlike Cold War Russians envying the West when they saw television programmes).

• The critical point comes in April-May; Haig’s ‘back to the wall message’ to his troops, and what it shows of his leadership qualities—and of them.

• The allies just hold on, but fresh troops ready now for the counter-attack. French crowds shout, ‘beaucoup Australiens ici’, and ‘bienvenue les yanks.’ The German army is played out and with the submarine campaign also swung the Allies way by summer 1918, Germany’s generals knew the last gamble had failed.

“...There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one of us must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the Freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.”

~General Sir Douglas Haig’s order of the day, 11 April 1918
Lecture 13: Victory in the West

Before beginning this lecture you may want to...
Read John Harris’s *Amiens to the Amiens Line*.

Introduction:
June to November 1918 is for the Allies the “forgotten victory” of the twentieth century, but deserves to be remembered as a period of continuous advance, in which all the armies involved on the Western Front moved steadily forward, capturing a huge amount of ground, and thousands of prisoners of war and weapons. This was a remarkable military effort and demonstrated the superiority by then of allied fighting power and tactics as well as sheer numbers. From August 1918 onward, the German military leaders knew that a defeat was unavoidable and sought only to mitigate its effects. In September-October 1918, Germany’s allies surrendered one by one, and on 11 November Germany, too, ended the war on terms that amounted to unconditional surrender.

Issues...
1. How the allies moved forward to victory.
2. Crossing the final fortified barrier, the Siegfried Line.
4. Germany surrenders, but the civilians have to carry the can.
5. The Eleventh Hour of the Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month.

Turning the Tide
• German weakness was a major factor after the failure of Operation Michael: a difficult line to hold, the lack of reserves, and faltering popular backing for the war. Allied intelligence reckoned that of 141 German divisions only 78 were fully fit and properly equipped; 54% of reinforcements were either returning wounded or were young boys.
• The Battle of Amiens (8-11 August) involved for the Allies careful preparations, fresh troops and a major strategic objective to clear a lateral railway line, a strategic hub and a river crossing; the fresh Canadian Corps kept in concealment for exploitation of the breakthrough.

• Amiens a smashing success, with big advance and a 3:1 casualty ratio for the attackers; really effective role for the four hundred allied tanks used.
• Seen by Ludendorff as the “Black day of the German army,” since whole units had surrendered, sometimes to smaller groups of allies, and officers seemed to have lost the power to control or inspire their men.
• How had the allies improved their fighting power? Preparation with care; short-term objectives; exploiting success, and maintaining momentum.
• Rolling forward continuously; occupying devastated country as Germany retreated and reactions to the devastation.

“Houses burnt, horses taken away, agricultural implements wilfully smashed, fruit trees and bushes cut down, even the hedges around their little gardens, their cemetery violated and the remains of their dead strewn to the four winds of heaven. Their wells polluted with garbage and filth; in some cases deliberately poisoned, in others totally destroyed by dynamite. Their churches used as stables for horses and for drunken orgies. All the younger men deported and the prettiest of the girls. In some cases their clothes had been forcibly taken away from them and sacks had been given in exchange to clothe themselves with. They were robbed of every penny they possessed. ... Is this war? It is the work of savages, ghouls, fiends.”

~Captain Geoffrey Malins, British war photographer

Keeping Up the Momentum and Crossing the Siegfried Line
• Allies advanced all along the line, probing for weakness and reinforcing strength.
• Haig’s “Hundred Days” shows the triumph of the British (Empire) army: though the smallest of the three armies by November 1918, the British took more prisoners and captured more guns than US and French troops combined in the second half of 1918.
• Nevertheless, the victory was an allied one in which all three armies advanced, all fought major battles and all scored victories.
• The Hindenburg Line/Westwall (defence in depth, with multiple strongpoints—bunkers, tunnels, tank-traps), its origins and purposes, but not fully completed (because of a weakening German war economy); nevertheless, allies approached the line with fear of a new stalemate.
"Tomorrow we are to take part in the greatest and most important battle that we have yet been in, for we are to assault the Hindenburg Line, the famous trench system which the Germans have boasted is impregnable."

-Captain Francis Fairweather, diary entry of an Australian officer, 28 September 1918

Aerial view of a portion of the Hindenburg Line, August, 1918

- Despite expectations, the allies manage an easy crossing of the line, with ordinary units from rather unfashionable regiments achieving some of the greatest successes; this suggests both the high morale was widespread and that the learning processes of better leadership and tactics had permeated right down through the armies.

- Winning this battle produced the first real expectations of an early victory by Allied soldiers, and greater haste by German leaders to end the war before the allies crossed into Germany.

- Under the continuous pressure, the German army begins finally to crack: desertions, mutinies, refusals to go into the trenches again.

America's Army in Action in Numbers

- US troop numbers and army structure (US 1st Army Headquarters operational from 31 July).

- St. Mihiel as the first independent attack (12-16 September); George Patton goes into action as a tank commander.

"A Great Day for the Americans! Our infantry is still pushing 'em back. Many prisoners are going by. We were at guns all morning, but had to stay in camp all afternoon. We are out of range and await orders to move up. Steady stream of men and material going up constantly. Two of our boys sneaked off and went up to the old Hun trenches and brought back lots of Hun souvenirs—razors, glasses, pictures, equipment, etc."

-Sgt. Edwin Gerth, 51st Artillery, diary, 13 September 1918

- Bigger battles fought in the last weeks, notably the Meuse-Argonne battle (September 26th to the end of October): an advance of 21 kilometres; 18,600 prisoners, 370 cannon, 1,000 machine guns, and a mass of material captured.

- Remarkable feats of Sergeant Alvin York (1887-1964), America's greatest war hero of 1914-18: he captures a German machine-gun nest and takes 132 German prisoners; winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor; an eventful life from Tennessee backwoods to the Argonne battle, and on to Washington, D.C.; the Sergeant York film (1941).

- How much difference did the United States make to the Allied war effort? A lively topic of debate.

Germany's Allies Collapse Elsewhere

- Allenby's drive through Palestine and Syria.

- Turkey and Bulgaria pull out of the war in September and October.

- Austria-Hungary's new Emperor Karl; his bid for independence is curtailed by Germany, April 1917.

- But the Empire was falling apart, with strikes, mutinies and local revolutions; Austria-Hungary surrenders on 4 November 1918.

German Surrender

- German leaders, thinking of the post-war, were trying to save the army as a conservative peace-time force.

- Understandable fears of revolution spreading from the East were not far from the reality since there were naval mutinies and street riots; Germany becomes a republic on 9 November.

- Military leaders were determined on shifting the blame, so returned power to the civilians.

- Germany asks for terms and the Allies' tough response.
GERMANY QUITS; FOCH ORDERS WAR TO END

LONDON, Nov. 11 (10:51 A.M.)—Marshal Foch, the generalissimo, issued the following order to all commanders to cease hostilities, said a French wireless dispatch today:

"To Commanders in Chief: Hostilities will cease on the whole front as from Nov. 11, at 11 O'Clock A.M. (French time). The allied troops will not, until further orders, go beyond the line reached on that date and at that hour. (Signed) Marshal Foch."

- No option left but accepting an armistice, which amounted to a surrender (How could Germany ever have restarted the war?).
- The railway car at Compiegne and its later use in 1940, still there as a grim reminder of the continuing effects of the Great War.

The Eleventh Hour: How the War Ended
- Casualties continued right up to the end: Wilfred Owen's death was only on 4th November; his parents receive the news only after the war ends with victory.
- "A silence round the world" as the guns fall silent.
- The mood of the armistice is one of relief and numbness rather than the exhilaration of victory.
- How else could it be with 15.5 million deaths to cope with, and hundreds of thousands, too, of the "missing" and the maimed. Millions of the bereaved added to by the worldwide influenza of 1918-19.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Consider

1. What was most crucial in allowing the allies to win the war in the second half of 1918?
2. How far did the fact that civilians and socialists surrendered on behalf of Germany affect the future?
3. How important was the United States war effort in ensuring the allied victory?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

Lecture 14: Aftermath and Reputation

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Gary Sheffield's Forgotten Victory: The First World War, Myths and Realities.

Introduction:

Though the fighting ended in November 1918, peace was not formally made until the Treaty of Versailles was signed in June 1919; it took even longer to return the countries involved to a true state of peace. The 1920s were though a "post-war" world in the sense that almost everything was conditioned by memories of the fighting and the disruption of war. Thousands of memorials were erected to war heroes and war's casualties, and large numbers of celebratory books were published. In 1927-30, though, a more critical view of the Great War began to appear in books and films, a mood of disillusion that was naturally reinforced as another world war approached. As the 1960s and 1970s showed, each generation has reinvented the Great War to suit its own core beliefs, and it remains a topic both of great interest and of lively dispute.

Issues . . .

1. Returning the world to normality, and trying to live with the war after 1918.
2. Disillusion and protest in the 1930s and the 1960s.
3. How the Great War is viewed today.

Getting Back to "Normal" in 1919 and After

- Months of peacemaking, actually years for some parts of Europe, involved time lags in setting up new machinery like the League of Nations; a prolonged hiatus requiring armies of occupation and continuing military service.
- Dangerously slow, then accelerated processes of demobilisation. Canadian and other armies riot; widespread fear of the veterans, and the role of veteran organisations in 1920s European politics; over time the veterans become a more conservative force.
- Veteran radicalism continued though on pensions issues; the unemployed hero, demands for educational and land reform; France's mutilés de guerre to be seen even as late as the 1960s.
- Continuing international disputes drawn from the war, occasioned by Reparations right up to the 1929 Wall Street crash.
- The desire to return to normal is endlessly delayed as there is no proper moment of closure. No end to "the war to end wars" and creeping disappointment as a result.
- A tide of routine and institutional history books appears in the 1920s, still illustrating a good market for an upbeat view of the war.
- Institutionalising commemoration: the annual ceremonies, and rituals like the sale of poppies.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.

~John McCrae, 23 May 1915

Building "A World Fit for Heroes" in the 1920s

- Aspirations existed for a better world that would justify all the sacrifice.
- War memorials, both national and in the community, served a dual purpose on the Allied side: celebration and consolation; the special rights of the bereaved in ceremonies; commemorating the "missing" of the war.
- Useful memorials existed too, as did shifts to more democratic institutions and more generous social policies as a consequence of wartime rhetoric.
- Broader social reform policies were common in 1919 and 1920, but then there was conflict with the conservative legislatures soon elected.
- The votes of the taxpayer and the servicing of war debts came to dominate the issue; the end of social reform in most countries by about 1921 (marking a strong contrast to post-1945 politics).
• Post-war industrial discontent existed, in some places revolutions, but then the return of party politics; veteran disillusion and in some countries alienation from the processes; the Great War's role in the origins of fascism.

Disillusion Sets In: 1927-1945

• The ten-year gap as a worldwide phenomenon: too soon to get a perspective, or did the post-war world produce the disillusion? The mood (and title) is referred to in Robert Graves' Goodbye to All That?
• There is a flood of 'anti-war' literature in 1927-30: Hemingway, Sassoon, Sherriff, and Remarque.
• Re-evaluating 'the war poets' of 1914-18 in the 1930s
• Films and the war: The Big Parade (1925), All Quiet on the Western Front (1930), La Grande Illusion (1937), The Roaring Twenties (1939), and onward to post-war films like Paths of Glory (1957); the afterlife of such films on television produces a continuing impact.
• Pacifism and war-fear in the 1930s derived from memories of 1914-18 plus the threat of carpet bombing, especially after Guernica: 'The Shape of Things to Come' in 1933-6 and the scientific futurism of the modern; Great War fears in the planning of D-Day, 1943-44.
• Hitler and his allies restate the concept of 'the just war': the Second World War was seen as a good cause, but its origins blamed on 1914-19; the holocaust prevents post-1945 disillusion; the tide of positive Second World War writing in 1945-60.

Oh What a Lovely War! The 1960s and 1970s

• The 1960s rediscovers the Great War; multiple writings on the poverty of Great War generalship: The Donkeys and its impact as a title; photographs and casually figures and their continuing power to shock.
• Popular texts from Tuchman (1962) and Taylor (1963) on the origins of the war as being everyone's fault, not German guilt; Fritz Fischer and others strike back (1961, soon afterwards in English); the historians' consensus.
• Rediscovering the silent pictures and the newsreels: the BBC's epic The Great War (1964) and its reception; the crowning image of the lost soldier.
• Rediscovering the songs: Oh What a Lovely War (1963 and film in 1969); a version for the anti-authoritarian "Sixties," in the world of anti-Vietnam War rallies and student protests.
• Popularising the war poets for school examination syllabuses.
• Oral history and its problems for 1914-18; the books and their mass audiences.
• Centering on wartime literature as "experience" rather than history; Paul Fussell and his agenda, the influence of his The Great War and Modern Memory in and after 1975.

Contemporary Perspectives

• The Second World War fades from memory into history, and the First re-emerges as the "Great" War; the end of the Cold War inevitably shifts evaluations of 1914-45.
• Peronne and its museum; parallel experiences, hardware and images; read your own moral into the displays.
• From the 1960s, the military historians begin to fight back, and a wide gap emerges between academic studies and popular perceptions.
• The debunked reputation of Sir Douglas Haig as a prime example of limited explanations and impossible agreement in Great War studies.
• German "atrocities" proved; America's contribution debated.
• A continuing source of fascination, a continuing outpouring of books, films and television programmes; the growing phenomenon of battlefield tourism.
• Choose your own Great War, but all can agree that it needs a judgement worthy of its size.
FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Consider

1. What impact did films like All Quiet on the Western Front have on collective memories of the war?
2. Why have historians been unable to reach a consensus on the performance of the Great War generals, as they have on other historical wars?
3. Why is the Second World War still popularly regarded as "the good war," the First World War as the essence of pointless and wasteful destruction?

Suggested Reading


Other Books of Interest


Websites to Visit

1. www.lib.byu.edu/~english/WWW/critical/critical.html - Brigham Young University (Harold B. Lee Library) recommended critical works about the Great War.
3. www.firstworldwar.bham.ac.uk/news/terraine.htm - The University of Birmingham (UK) Centre for First World War Studies. This page is by Peter Simkins on the life and studies of John Terraine, an eminent World War I scholar and writer. Many of Terraine's works are cited (and recommended) in this article.

Suggested Reading:


All books are available on-line through www.modernscholar.com or by calling Recorded Books at 1-800-636-3398.
Other Books of Interest:


Other Books of Interest (continued):


All books are available on-line through www.modernscholar.com
or by calling Recorded Books at 1-800-636-3399.