

GOV 355M (38870)
World War I in Real Time
University of Texas, Fall 2014
TTH 1230-2p, MEZ 1.216
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Faculty Information

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Course Description and Objectives

The First World War has been called “the first calamity of the twentieth century, the calamity from which all other calamities sprang,” and indeed we still live with many of its legacies today, some directly in the current map of the Middle East and others indirectly in the global order created after the end of the Second World War. The war is notable not only for its consequences but also for its towering complexity, leading one historian to call it “the most complex [event] of modern times, perhaps of any time so far.” While its consequences demand that we explain the war, its complexity often stands in the way of doing so.

In this course, we will grapple with that complexity by bringing the tools of political science to bear on the opening months of the war, including such topics as

- the outbreak and subsequent expansion of the war
- the politics of international law and neutrality
- the origins of trench warfare and costly strategies of attrition
- domestic mobilization and the running of the war economy
- the treatment of prisoners and civilians at and behind the front.

We will address these topics, as much as possible, in real time, albeit one hundred years after the fact, and we will do so using the theoretical tools of modern political science. After introducing some of these tools early on, such as game theory and its associated concepts of strategy and equilibrium, we will track the war’s events day-to-day, analyzing the goals, choices, and actions of the relevant players—sometimes countries, sometimes generals, sometimes laborers—and how they added up to produce what we know as the First World War.

Thus, while the course deals with the day-to-day realities of a major historical event, it is not, strictly speaking, a history course. Our goal is to analyze, to explain, and to identify new

puzzles—to train you, in other words, to think like a political scientist. You'll walk away from this course knowing quite a bit more about the first few months of the war than you did before, yes, but you'll also be able to apply the concepts and theories we use in class, from bargaining and war to principal-agent problems and collective action problems, to a wide range of other phenomenon. Put differently, we're leveraging a singular event of inherent interest to develop an understanding of politics and political science more generally.

Prerequisites

Upper-division standing and 6 semester hours of lower-division coursework in government.

Grading

The following components make up the course grade:

- 20% **first exam, 30 September.** Five short answer and two essay questions.
- 25% **second exam, 6 November.** Five short answer and two essay questions.
- 35% **third exam, 16 December (9a-12p).** Five short answer and two essay questions.
- 20% **short assignments and quizzes.** Given randomly, quizzes for readings and short assignments for reaction or analysis.

I assign letter grades on a distribution—that is, a curve—rather than against an absolute numerical scale. Therefore, typical grading scales where a certain score produces a certain letter grade do not apply here. Quizzes are brief and are designed to evaluate whether students are keeping up with the readings and showing up to class on time; I give them at the beginning of class, and if you miss any part of it by being late, *then you forfeit those points*. There are no exceptions. Finally, assignments are typically short (1-2 pages) reaction or analysis pieces.

Course Policies

While I have no attendance policy, missing information in the lectures will pose a serious problem for your ability to perform well in the course, because (a) some of the readings are demanding on their own and need to be clarified in class and (b) lectures will very often contain information not found in the readings. Missing classes will also prevent you from earning a good quiz/short assignment grade, because quizzes and short assignments cannot be made up after the fact. Remember, again, that I give quizzes by asking questions at the beginning of class, and I will not re-ask a question (or re-give any part of the quiz) if you're late.

Missed exams can be excused and made up after the fact in cases of illness and personal emergency, but *only with proper documentation from the University*. Further, I do not give exams ahead of their scheduled dates. Exams missed due to a university sponsored event or religious holiday may be excused, provided that the student informs me of the absence *at least two weeks in advance*. Vacation (e.g. leaving early for spring or semester break) and social engagements will not be excused. Check the exam schedule before making travel plans, because, again, I do *not* give makeup exams in advance. There are no exceptions.

Should you wish to challenge a grade you received on a specific question on an exam, you must do so within a week of receiving the grade. Otherwise, no challenges will be considered. After you challenge a grade, I—not the TA—will re-grade the entire exam, and the new grade will supplant the original one, whether higher or lower.

Finally, the readings and schedule of the syllabus are subject to change, but any such changes will be noted with an announcement either in class and/or via email, as well as an updated copy of the syllabus posted on the course's [Canvas](#) site.

University and Campus Policies

1. Students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

2. Accommodations for religious holidays.

By university policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

3. Academic dishonesty.

“Scholastic dishonesty... includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act” (Section 11-802 (b), *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*).

If you have any questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty, you should consult with me and [this website](#). Any student that violates this policy will fail this course and have the details of the violation reported to Student Judicial Services.

4. Emergency evacuation policy.

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with “Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley” written in the subject line.

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Readings

Many course readings will be available online through the library’s e-journals system or [Canvas](#), unless otherwise noted. There are also two required texts:

- Fromkin, David. 2005. *Europe’s Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?* New York: Vintage Books.
- Hastings, Max. 2013. *Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War* New York: Knopf.

Students are expected to have completed readings by the day for which they are assigned.

Course Outline and Schedule

Session 1 (28 August). *no class*

Session 2 (2 September). *the puzzle of the Great War*

- Fromkin, Prologue

Session 3 (4 September). *basic concepts: strategy, equilibrium, and tragedy*

- Fromkin, Ch. 1-3

Session 4 (9 September). *the world before the Great War*

- Fromkin, Ch. 4-6
- Hastings, Ch. 1.1

Session 5 (11 September). *battle plans, beliefs, and equilibrium*

- Hastings, Ch. 1.2
- Selections from Buttar (2014, *Collision of Empires* TBA) [[Canvas](#)]

Session 6 (16 September). *outbreak I: underlying causes*

- Fromkin, Ch. 25-28
- Buttar, Ch. 4 [[Canvas](#)]

Session 7 (18 September). *outbreak II: proximate causes*

- Fromkin, Ch. 29-31
- Hastings, Ch. 2.1-2

Session 8 (23 September). *expansion I: the alliance network*

- Hastings, Ch. 2.3

Session 9 (25 September). *expansion II: the issue of Belgian neutrality*

- Hastings, Ch. 2.4
- Wolford, Scott. 2014. "A Theory of Neutrality Rights in War." Manuscript, University of Texas. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 10 (30 September). *first exam*

Session 11 (2 October). *'the superb spectacle of the world bursting into flames'*

- Hastings, Ch. 3

Session 12 (7 October). *battles of encounter and the new face of war*

- Hastings, Ch. 4

Session 13 (9 October). *no class*

Session 14 (14 October). *the beginning of the war in the west*

- Hastings, Ch. 5

Session 15 (16 October). *behind the lines I: prisoners of war*

- Morrow, James D. 2007. "When Do States Follow the Laws of War?" *American Political Science Review* 101.3:559-572. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 16 (21 October). *the great Allied retreat and General Instruction No. 2*

- Hastings, Ch. 9

Session 17 (23 October). *the Battle of the Marne*

- Hastings, Ch. 10
- Herwig, Ch. 9 [[Canvas](#)]

Session 18 (28 October). *the curiously absent naval war*

- Hastings, Ch. 11

Session 19 (30 October). *behind the lines II: strikes and unrest at home*

- Hastings, Ch. 13

Session 20 (4 November). *First Ypres and the horror of attrition*

- Hastings, Ch. 15

Session 21 (6 November). *second exam*

Session 22 (11 November). *the war in Poland (and why the Eastern Front is so different)*

- Hastings, Ch. 12

Session 23 (13 November). *back to Serbia: fissures amongst the Central Powers*

- Hastings, Ch. 16

Session 24 (18 November). *order in the trenches*

- Hastings, Ch. 17

Session 25 (20 November). *behind the lines III: civilians, francs-tireurs, and occupiers*

- Buttar, TBA [[Canvas](#)]

Session 26 (25 November). *the battle of Łódź*

- Buttar, Ch. 13 [[Canvas](#)]

Session 27 (2 December). *four more years of war*

- Fromkin, Ch. 52,53
- Hastings, Ch. 18

Session 28 (4 December). *counterfactuals: what could've stopped it?*

- Fromkin, Ch. 48
- Beatty, Ch. 5 [[Canvas](#)]