## 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 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 that sprang from the First. 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 sheer scope and complexity often stands in the way of doing do.

In this course, we will grapple with that complexity by bringing the tools of political science to bear on the opening eighteen 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

- the politics of mobilization and the war economy

- the politics of alliances and coalition warfare

We will address these topics, as much as possible (less so in 2015 than it was in 2014), 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 week-to-week and month-to-month, analyzing the goals, choices, and actions of the relevant players—sometimes countries, sometimes soldiers, 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 year and a half of the Great War than you did before, yes, but you'll also be able to apply the concepts and theories we use in class, from bargaining, war, and diplomacy to collective action problems, to a wide range of other phenomena. 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, 29 September.** Five short answer and two essay questions.

- 25% **second exam, 29 October.** Five short answer and two essay questions.

- 35% **third exam, TBA.** 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, some of which will shape class discussion and topics as well.

## 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 if you're late. Assignments turned in late will also not be accepted. However, since this is generally a class with a long wait-list, I do reserve the right to remove students from the class that do not attend the first week, in accordance with university policy.

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, in writing, within a week of receiving the grade. Otherwise, no challenges will be considered. After you challenge a grade, I will re-grade the entire exam, and the new grade will supplant the original one, whether higher or lower. Relatedly, I won't respond to a challenge or any other written (or digital) communication that doesn't include a proper greeting and grammar. Otherwise, it's in the ether.

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.

## 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:

- Hastings, Max. 2013. *Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War* Knpof.

- Philpott, William. 2014. *War of Attrition: Fighting the First World War* Overlook.

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

## Course Outline and Schedule

**Session 1** (27 August)**.** *the puzzle of the Great War*

- Philpott, Prologue and Introduction

- Fromkin 2005, Prologue [Canvas]

**Session 2** (1 September)**.** *basic concepts: strategy, equilibrium, and tragedy*

- Philpott, Ch. 1

- Fromkin 2005, Ch. 1-3 [Canvas]

**Session 3** (3 September)**.** *no class*

- Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East*, Ch. 1 [Canvas]

**Session 4** (8 September)**.** *Europe before the Great War*

- Fromkin, Ch. 4-6 [Canvas]
- Hastings, Ch. 1.1

**Session 5** (10 September). *battle plans, strategy, and equilibrium*

- Hastings, Ch. 1.2
- Buttar, *Collision of Empires*, TBA [Canvas]

**Session 6** (15 September). *outbreak I: German aims in the July Crisis*

- Fromkin, Ch. 25-28 [Canvas]
- Buttar, *Collision of Empires*, Ch. 4 [Canvas]

**Session 7** (17 September). *outbreak II: Russian goals in the July Crisis*

- Fromkin, Ch. 29-31 [Canvas]
- Hastings, Ch. 2.1-2

**Session 8** (22 September). *Public opinion and the outbreak of war*

- Hastings, Ch. 2.3

**Session 9** (24 September). *the British and Belgian neutrality*

- Hastings, Ch. 2.4
- Wolford, Scott. 2015. "A Theory of Neutrality Rights in War." Manuscript, University of Texas. [Canvas]

**Session 10** (29 September). *first exam*

**Session 11** (1 October). *labor, pacifism, and support for the war*

- Hastings, Ch. 3
- Philpott, Ch. 4

**Session 12** (6 October). *fighting "unwinnable" wars*

- Hastings, Ch. 4

**Session 13** (8 October). *the opening of the war in the West*

- Hastings, Ch. 5
- Philpott, Ch. 2

**Session 14** (13 October). *the great Allied retreat*

- Hastings, Ch. 9

**Session 15** (15 October). *the Battle of the Marne*

- Hastings, Ch. 10
- Herwig, *The Marne, 1914*, Ch. 9 [Canvas]

**Session 16** (20 October). *the curiously limited naval war*

- Hastings, Ch. 11

**Session 17** (22 October). *an exercise in armchair generalship*

- Hastings, Ch. 13
- Writing assignment designed to (a) produce an alternative to the Moltke-Schlieffen Plan then (b) assess whether it would've made a difference in the invasion of France.

**Session 18** (27 October). *the horror (and stability) of attrition*

- Hastings, Ch. 15
- Philpott, Ch. 3

**Session 19** (29 October). *second exam*

**Session 20** (3 November). *Germany (temporarily) ascendant...in the East*

- Hastings, Ch. 12
- Philpott, Ch. 6

**Session 21** (5 November). *the war in East Asia*

- readings TBA

**Session 22** (10 November). *Gallipoli and the war in the Middle East*

- Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East*, Ch. 3-4 [Canvas]

**Session 23** (12 November). *no class*

- Writing assignment designed to (a) consider an alternative strategy for one belligerent in the war outside the European theater and (b) assess whether it would've made a difference in the fighting on the Continent.

**Session 24** (17 November). *war expansion and choosing sides*

- Hastings, Ch. 17

**Session 25** (19 November)**.** *unrestricted submarine warfare and* materialschlacht

- Philpott, Ch. 8
- Watson, *Ring of Steel*, 226-241 [Canvas]

**Session 26** (24 November)**.** *the question of American neutrality*

- Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War*, Ch. 6

**Session 27** (1 December)**.** *the defeat of Serbia...and three more years of war*

- Hastings, Ch. 18
- Philpott, Epilogue

**Session 28** (3 December)**.** *counterfactuals: what, if anything, could've stopped it?*

- Fromkin, Ch. 48 [Canvas]