

AFTER THE GREAT WAR

HIS 100-01, F1 2020



(Images courtesy of *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/projects/world-war-i-in-photos/>)

The recent centenaries of the First World War (1914-18) and its aftermath offer a timely opportunity to investigate the role of the war in the making of the modern era. Historians agree that this “total war” had a far-reaching impact on every facet of life, but they agree on little else. Should the war be understood as the last war of the 19th century or the first war of the 20th? Did it constitute a watershed moment, or accelerate processes that were already underway? Were the instabilities of the interwar period the direct result of the war, or of unforeseen developments in its wake? Did people process the trauma of war by embracing or rejecting their pre-war past? To what extent did participants experience and interpret the war in the same way? Taking such questions of causality, experience, and meaning as our starting point, this course will evaluate the impact of the war in a series of social, political, economic, cultural, geographic, and historiographical settings. Students will also learn to become practicing historians themselves (and, hopefully, to fall in love with the process of doing history!).

Instructor

Elizabeth Prevost

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<https://www.grinnell.edu/user/prevoste>

Office hours: Wed 10:00-11:30 a.m. CST (drop-in hours in my Webex room:

<https://grinnellcollege.webex.com/meet/prevoste>), or by appointment

***Curricular assistant***

Annika Little '22

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Office hours TBA



Course objectives

Students in this class will learn how to:

- read and critically analyze primary sources
- read and critically analyze secondary sources
- research, synthesize, and critically evaluate a body of primary sources in an archive
- research, synthesize, and critically evaluate a body of secondary historical literature

They will engage with:

- history as a craft and a discipline
- a diversity of methods, approaches, and narratives about the past

They will develop:

- skills of analytical, argumentative writing
- skills of oral communication and dialogue

Course requirements and evaluation

Class citizenship & contribution (30% - about equally divided between oral and written contributions):

History happens in dialogue, and I evaluate class participation accordingly. In these unusual circumstances of remote learning, “class participation” might look, sound, and/or feel different than it otherwise would; therefore, it becomes even more important that we think intentionally together as a group and that each person in the class take responsibility for generating ideas and ensuring that all voices can be heard. We will use different platforms to develop that dialogue, including plenary meetings, small-group workshops, and discussion boards.

In evaluating your contributions, I will be looking for:

- evidence-based points that marshal specific examples and passages from the texts;
- multi-layered responses to the questions that build on and develop your peers’ comments, and that engage positions rather than people;
- “I” statements that respect differences of opinion and experience and that grapple with historical complexity while avoiding the replication of offensive language and ideas;
- self-awareness of your role within the group dynamic (Is it a time to speak up or to listen? To assert or rethink a position? How can I phrase my points in a way that invites, rather than shuts down, further conversation?);
- a willingness to keep an open mind and to learn from new encounters with texts, people, and ideas;
- devotion of your fullest possible attention to the discussion or task at hand.

Formal writing assignments (see below for deadlines; assignment sheets will be posted on Pweb):

Throughout the semester you will be engaging in various iterations of the historian’s craft by researching, analyzing, synthesizing, and critiquing different sets of sources, historians, and debates. Your final grade will be comprised of the following components:

- Film analysis (2 pages) = 10%
- James Normal Hall archive paper (5 pages) = 25% →
- Final historiography project, developed in successive stages = 35%

All work must be typed and double-spaced (unless otherwise noted), in 12-pt font and 1-inch margins. Citations must be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago/Turabian Style – see document on Pweb for guidelines. Academic honesty expectations follow college policy.

Late assignments:

Each of you may take a 48-hour extension on one deadline of your choice. If choosing this option, you must notify me of your intent to take the extension no later than 24 hours before the published deadline. (Remember that if you take the extension, you are still responsible for preparing the requisite reading or other assignments that may coincide with your revised deadline.) For all other assignments, late submissions will receive a grade deduction. Exceptions may be made for serious health or personal issues.

Note: The college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the last day of the term unless you are taking an incomplete in the class. Work turned in after that time will not be considered.

Writing & research support:

I am available to offer feedback at all stages of your work! Additionally:

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. Make an appointment online: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>

Chris Jones, the college archivist, is the consulting librarian for our class. For help with research strategies, you can contact him at joneschr@grinnell.edu, and/or book a library lab with reference specialists: https://grinnell.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_efECq6VFplUC74N

Expectations of written work:

Although each assignment will entail specific criteria, the same general questions will guide my evaluation of your writing:

- Have you framed and stated a compelling argument?
- Do you develop the argument logically and coherently through sound organization?
- Do you support the argument with appropriate evidence, properly cited?
- Is your language clear, eloquent, concise, and free of grammatical errors?

Course texts

The following books are required. They can be purchased from the college bookstore or online vendors; they are also available on reserve in Burling.

- John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000)
- Frank McDonough, *Origins of the First and Second World Wars* (Cambridge, 1997)

Other texts (both required and recommended) will be available online, through the college libraries, or on Pweb, as noted below.

Access & accommodation

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, Autumn Wilke wilkeaut@grinnell.edu, and discuss their needs with her. Students should then speak with me as early as possible in the semester so that we can discuss ways to coordinate accommodations and ensure full participation in the course.

Religious observance

Grinnell College acknowledges and embraces the religious diversity of its faculty, students and staff. Faculty and students share responsibility to support members of our community who observe religious holidays. Students will provide faculty members with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent, and this notice would be expected to occur no later than the third week of the term. Faculty members will make reasonable efforts to accommodate students who need to be absent from examinations or class due to religious observance. Students are responsible for completing any part of the course work, including examinations, they have missed due to religious observance, and faculty members are responsible for giving them the opportunity to do so. (Approved by the Faculty, September 21, 2009)

The learning environment of 2020

This class, like many others, is happening in a larger context of uncertainty, stress, frustration, and inequality. I will be as sensitive as I can about those constraints and ask that you do the same for me and your classmates, even as we hold each other to the high standards that characterize a Grinnell education. I commit to doing all I can to make this class a meaningful experience for all of its participants, and I thank you for your trust and engagement in the collective process of learning what it means to do history in the midst of an undeniably historical moment.

COURSE SCHEDULE (all times refer to CST)

Note: Although this schedule constitutes the core framework for our class plan, I reserve the right to make changes in order to accommodate class rhythms, textual or technological access, or unforeseen circumstances.

Week 1: True stories

Mon, Aug 31: What is history?

Required:

- Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, ch. 1
- War letters (Pweb)
- 10:30-11:15 a.m. kickoff class Webex meeting (optional instructor & assistant office hours will follow, 11:15-11:45 a.m.)

Wed, Sept 2: What was history?

Required:

- Arnold, chaps. 2-5
- Patrick Rael, "What Happened and Why? Helping Students Read and Write Like Historians," *The History Teacher* 39 (Nov 2005), 23-32 - Pweb
- Small group workshops (see separate instructions)

Fri, Sept 4: How is history done?

Required:

- Arnold, chaps. 6 & 7
- Erin Bartram, "What is Revisionist History?" (Pweb)
- Pweb discussion board posts due by 11:00 a.m. (see separate prompts)

Week 2: Master narratives

Mon, Sept 7: Who or what was responsible for the Great War?

Required:

- McDonough, *Origins of the First and Second World Wars*, chaps. 1 & 2
- Jay Winter & Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 9, "The Great War in History" – Pweb
- Pweb discussion board posts due by 10:00 a.m. (see separate prompt)
- Webex class meeting 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Recommended:

- Winter & Prost, "Three Historiographical Configurations" (*Great War in History*, ch. 1) – Ebook via library catalog

Wed, Sept 9: Screening the war

Required:

- Peter Jackson, dir., *They Shall Not Grow Old* (WingNut Films, 2018) – available for streaming on Pweb
- Santanu Das, "Colors of the Past: Archive, Art, and Amnesia in a Digital Age," *American Historical Review* 124 (Dec 2019), 1771-1781 – Pweb

- Susan R. Grayzel, "Who Gets to Be in the War Story? Absences and Silences in *They Shall Not Grow Old*," *American Historical Review* 124 (Dec 2019), 1782-1788 – Pweb
- Small group meetings (see separate instructions)

Recommended:

- Jessica Meyer, "Sound and Silence in Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old*," and Catherine Robson, "Age and Youth, Sound and Vision," *American Historical Review* 124 (Dec 2019), 1789-1797 (available through library catalog)

Fri, Sept 11:

2-page film analysis due on Pweb by 12 noon

Week 3: Experiences

Mon: Sept 14: War memoir (I)

Required:

- James Norman Hall, *My Island Home*, ch. 5 & 14-22 (on Burling catalog via HathiTrust)
- Pweb discussion board posts due by 10:00 a.m.
- Class Webex meeting with Chris Jones: 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Further reading:

- Ian Andrew Isherwood, *Remembering the Great War: Writing and Publishing the Experiences of World War I* (London, 2017) – Ebook available through library catalog
- Santanu Das, ed., *Race, Empire, and First World War Writing* (Cambridge, 2011) – Ebook available through library catalog
- Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, 1999) – library catalog via HathiTrust
- Philip Dwyer, ed., *War Stories: The War Memoir in History and Literature* (New York, 2017)

Wed, Sept 16: War memoir (II)

Required:

- Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, chapter sections III (Oxford versus War), VIII (Between the Sandhills & the Sea), X (Survivors Not Wanted) - on Burling catalog via HathiTrust
- Small group meetings

Further reading:

- Mark Bostridge, *Vera Brittain and the First World War: The Story of Testament of Youth* (London, 2014)

Fri, Sept 18: War literature

Required:

- Modris Ecksteins, "Memory," from *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York, 1989), ch. IX – Pweb
- Pweb discussion board posts due by 11:00 a.m.

Further reading:

- Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975)

Week 4: (Re)constructions

Mon, Sept 21: Myth, modernism, & mourning

Required:

- Jay Winter, Introduction to *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural Memory* (Cambridge, 1995) – Pweb
- Joy Damousi, Introduction to *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Cambridge, 2010) – Pweb
- W. Caleb McDaniel, "How to Read for History," 2008, <http://wcm1.web.rice.edu/howtoread.pdf>
- Pweb discussion board posts due by 10:00 a.m.
- Class Webex meeting 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Further reading:

- All of *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* and *Living with the Aftermath*

Wed, Sept 23: Gender trouble

Required:

- Mary Louise Roberts, "Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women's Fashion in 1920s France," *American Historical Review* 98:3 (1993), 657-684 – find & download via library catalog
- Susan R. Grayzel & Tammy M. Proctor, "The Scholarship of the First World War," in Grayzel & Proctor, eds, *Gender and the Great War* (Oxford, 2017), ch.13 – Pweb
- Small group meetings

Recommended:

- Grayzel & Proctor, eds., *Gender and the Great War*, chaps. 1-12 – Ebook available through library catalog
- Susan K. Kent, "Remembering the Great War," *Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998), 105-110
- Richard Badenhansen, "Mourning through Memoir: Trauma, Testimony, and Community in Vera Brittain's 'Testament of Youth,'" *Twentieth-Century Literature* 49 (Winter 2003), 421-448.
- Tracey Loughran, "A Crisis of Masculinity? Re-writing the History of Shell-shock and Gender in First World War Britain," *History Compass* 11 (2013), 727-738.

Fri, Sept 25:

JNH Archive paper due by 12 noon

Week 5: CausationsMon, Sept 28: A Thirty-Years War?

Required:

- McDonough, chaps. 3-5
- Pweb discussion board posts due by 10:00 a.m.
- Class meeting 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Further reading:

- William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power* (New York, 1984)
- Henry Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power* (New York, 2003)

Wed, Sept 30: The birth of internationalism?

Required:

- Documents on the U.S. debate over the founding of the League of Nations – Pweb
- Small group meetings

Recommended:

- Susan Pedersen, "Back to the League of Nations," *American Historical Review* 112 (Oct 2007), 1091-1117 – available through library catalog

Fri, Oct 2

Project proposal due by 12:00 noon

Week 6: Scopes

Mon, Oct 5: Possibilities

Required:

- Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006), 1327-51 (find & download through library catalog)
- Wilson's 14 Points (Pweb)
- 10:30 Class webex meeting

Wed, Oct 7: Powers

Required:

- Robert Gerwath & Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War: 1911-1923* (Oxford, 2014), intro & ch. 13 – Pweb
- Choose one additional chapter from *Empires at War* and evaluate as a case study (Ebook available through library catalog)
- Small group meetings

Further reading:

- See the many great sources in fn 12 in Grayzel & Proctor, "Scholarship of the First World War"

Fri, Oct 9: Pathogens

Required:

- George Dehner, "Flu: Past and Present," *History Compass* 5/2 (2007): 709–724 (find & download through library catalog)
- Pweb discussion board posts due by 11:00 a.m.

Week 7: Conclusions

Mon, Oct 12: Contested commemorations

Required:

- Press coverage of centenary poppies installation at the Tower of London (Pweb)
- Class meeting 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Wed, Oct 14

Phase I of final project due by 12:00 noon

Fri, Oct 16

Research peer group meetings

Tues, Oct 20

Final project drafts due by 12 noon