

## AFTER THE GREAT WAR

HIS 100-02, Fall 2023  
Tues 10:00-11:50, Thurs 10:00-10:50, HSSC N1116



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

The First World War (1914-18) and its aftermath played a crucial role in making the modern era. Historians agree that this “total war” had a far-reaching impact on almost every facet of life, but they agree on little else. Should the war be understood as the last war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the first war of the 20<sup>th</sup>? 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, biographical, 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**

Prof. Elizabeth Prevost (pronounced PRAY-vo)

She/Her

History Department

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Fall '23 office hours: Mon & Wed, 1:00-3:00 pm, & by appointment

**Writing Mentors (WMs)**

Ran Wei

She/Her

Psychology & Classics major

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Oliver Palmer

He/Him

History major

[palmerol@grinnell.edu](mailto:palmerol@grinnell.edu)

### ***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 (25%)

History happens in dialogue, and I evaluate class participation accordingly. Each person in the class must take a share of responsibility for generating ideas and ensuring that all voices have the opportunity to be heard. 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? Are my contributions concise enough to allow others to add to them? 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, ideas;
- devotion of your fullest possible attention to the discussion or task at hand.

In-person class is our main forum for discussion; you may also use the Pweb discussion board to supplement your contributions. Class absences may adversely affect your grade; if there is a health or personal issue preventing you from attending class in person, please let me know beforehand so that we can assess whether there is an alternative way for you to participate or contribute.

#### Writing assignments (see below for deadlines; assignment sheets will be posted in advance on Pweb):

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

- Film analysis = 10%
- James Normal Hall archive paper (final draft) = 25%
- Book review essay = 15%
- Historiography project (final draft) = 25%

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.

### Writing & research support:

We are very fortunate to have two peer writing consultants, called Writing Mentors, assigned to this course: Ran Wei and Oliver Palmer. Each of you will work with one of them outside the classroom on two multi-staged projects to get feedback on your drafts and plan your revisions. Their job is not to grade your papers or answer questions about course content but to encourage you to pay serious attention to your writing. I asked for Writing Mentors to work with this class because I believe that all writers—even very accomplished writers—can improve their writing by sharing works in progress in order to find out from thoughtful readers what works and doesn't work for them. These meetings are required; the drafts themselves are ungraded, but failing to submit your draft or honor your meeting will adversely affect your grade.

In addition to this resource, Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center (ground floor of Carnegie in HSSC) provides feedback and support for any project related to writing, reading, or speaking. Whether you're writing a paper for a class, scripting a podcast, or applying for an internship or graduate program; reading academic writing for the first time or sorting through research for your Mentored Academic Project; getting ready for a Tutorial discussion or preparing to present at an academic conference—if you're working on it, the Writing Center consultants will talk about it with you. You can set up a one-on-one session to talk through ideas, review readings, analyze evidence, focus paragraphs, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences, organize drafts, plan presentations, or work on any other part of the process. Writing Center instructors don't proofread papers, but they can show you strategies for editing your own work. 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](mailto:joneschr@grinnell.edu), and/or book a library lab with reference specialists: [https://grinnell.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_ efECq6VFplUC74N](https://grinnell.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ efECq6VFplUC74N)

Finally, remember that I am available to offer feedback at any stage of your work!

### Expectations of written work:

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

- Have you followed the assignment?
- Have you framed and stated a compelling argument that goes beyond a superficial or overly simplistic interpretation?

- Do you develop the argument logically and coherently through sound organization?
- Do you support the argument with appropriate evidence from primary and/or secondary sources, properly cited?
- Is your language clear, concise, and free of major grammatical errors?

When returning papers, my feedback is intended to help improve your writing skills, rather than to explain a grade. For that reason, my comments will be selective and strategic, not comprehensive. This system is designed to encourage communication and collaboration so that we can work together to develop your skills.

### **Course texts**

The following books are required:

- John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000) – available through the college bookstore, online vendors, or library reserve
- Frank McDonough, *Origins of the First and Second World Wars* (Cambridge, 1997) – available through the college bookstore, online vendors, or library reserve
- Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural Memory* (Cambridge, 1995/2014) – available through the college bookstore, online vendors, library reserve, or library catalog:  
[https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=cdi\\_cambridge\\_cbo\\_10\\_1\\_017\\_CBO9781107050631&context=PC&vid=01GCL\\_INST:GCL&lang=en&search\\_scope=MyInst\\_and\\_CI&adaptor=Primo%20Central&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,jay%20winter%20sites%20of%20memory&offset=0](https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=cdi_cambridge_cbo_10_1_017_CBO9781107050631&context=PC&vid=01GCL_INST:GCL&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Primo%20Central&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,jay%20winter%20sites%20of%20memory&offset=0)
- William S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power* (New York, 1984) – available through the college bookstore, online vendors, or library reserve
- Henry A. Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power* (Reading, MA, 1996) – available through the college bookstore, online vendors, or library reserve

Other required texts will be available online, through the college libraries, or on Pweb, as noted below.

### **Electronic devices in class**

Assigned texts and notes should be brought to class each day. If you plan to use anything besides a hard copy of the texts or a paper notebook, please follow these guidelines:

- Phones may not be used in class.
- E-readers that lay flat may be used in class, provided they allow for highlighting/notetaking/annotating/searching and are put in airplane mode.
- Laptops may be used in class under the following conditions:
  - a) The relevant programs you are using for the course texts allow in-text highlighting and annotation and quick reference to textual selections.
  - b) All windows and applications not being used to access course texts or take notes—including, but not limited to, email, social media, internet browsing, and notifications—must be fully closed and disengaged (not just minimized).
  - c) When not directly referencing your texts or notes, please flip the laptop screen partially down so that you prioritize listening to and connecting with the other humans in the room.

These restrictions do not apply to those with specific accommodations; they will also be waived on days we are doing research exercises and paper workshopping. Please contact me if you would like to discuss your particular situation with regard to classroom technology.

### ***Managing workloads & deadlines***

I have designed the syllabus to keep expectations reasonable and workloads manageable, while still challenging students to do their best work and grow beyond their initial skills and knowledge levels. If you are finding any aspect of the workload overly demanding or any expectations difficult to meet, please be in touch with me sooner rather than later so we can develop productive strategies together.

Deadlines for written work are timed when they are for a reason. I will post assignments and guidelines well in advance, and I will not require any other work on the days paper drafts or finals are due; for this reason, I expect that you will make every effort to meet the published deadlines so that you do not get behind in other work. If there is a serious health or personal issue that undermines your ability to meet a deadline or to keep up with the other work of the course, please let me know as soon before the deadline as possible; I will exercise my best judgment in deciding whether to renegotiate the deadline and/or the paper expectations. Draft deadlines are not renegotiable out of respect for the Writing Mentors' time and schedules; however, just remember that the drafts are not graded.

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 cannot be considered.

### ***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](mailto: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)

## COURSE SCHEDULE & DEADLINES

*Note: Required & recommended texts (readings and films) are listed under the class day for which they are to be prepared. Questions & guidelines for each day's preparation are posted on Pweb.*

*Also 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 or unforeseen circumstances.*

### I: True stories

#### Thurs Aug 24: Introduction

- JNH letter from a German prison camp (Email & Pweb)

#### Tues Aug 29: What is (and was) history?

- Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, ch. 1-5
- Patrick Rael, "What Happened and Why? Helping Students Read and Write Like Historians," *The History Teacher* 39 (Nov 2005), 23-32 - Pweb

#### Thurs Aug 31: Who and what make history?

- Arnold, chaps. 6 & 7

### II. Master narratives

#### Tues Sept 5: Who or what caused the Great War?

- McDonough, *Origins of the First and Second World Wars*, chap 1 & 2 + corresponding documents

#### Thurs Sept 7: Screening the war

- Watch film: *They Shall Not Grow Old* (Peter Jackson, 2018) – available through various streaming services or on reserve in Burling.

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*I am traveling internationally and will be away from campus Sept 10-19, but I will be checking email as regularly as possible. Here is what is happening during my physical absence:*

#### Tues Sept 12: Critical responses

Meet with your assigned group to discuss these articles (see separate instructions 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

#### Thurs Sept 14: Assessing the narrative

- 2-page film analysis due
- Post a recap of your central finding (1-3 sentences) on the Pweb Discussion Board

### III: Experiences

#### Tues Sept 19: War letters (I)

Class today meets in Special Collections (Burling basement) for an introduction to the James Norman Hall collection with Chris Jones. **Do not miss this class—it is crucial for the JNH archive paper!!**

- Assignment: skim James Norman Hall, *My Island Home*, ch. 5 & 14-22 (on Pweb; physical book on reserve in Burling)
- [Optional: Penny Summerfield, “Historians’ Uses of Letters” and “Autobiography, Memoir, and the Historian” – Pweb]

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#### Thurs Sept 21: War letters (II)

- Indian letters from the Great War (Pweb)
- Vera Brittain & Roland Leighton letters (Pweb)
- [Optional: Selections from Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* – Pweb]

#### Tues: Sept 26: War memory

- Modris Ecksteins, “Memory,” from *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York, 1989), ch. IX – Pweb
- Introduction & conclusion to Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*

#### Thurs Sept 28: Taking stock

- JNH paper draft due by 4:00 pm (for Writing Mentor feedback)

### IV. (Re)constructions

#### Tues Oct 3: Postwar culture

- Winter, Pt I (chaps 1-4)
- W. Caleb McDaniel, “How to Read for History,” 2008 – Pweb

#### Thurs Oct 5: Postwar culture

- Winter, Pt II (choose one of the chapters in this section—5, 6, 7, or 8—and read it with an eye to how it advances the book’s central claims)
- Rael, “Predatory Reading” – Pweb

#### Tues Oct 10: Gender trouble

- Mary Louise Roberts, “Samson & Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women’s Fashion in 1920s France,” *American Historical Review* 98:3 (1993), 657-684 – locate via library catalog & download/print

#### Thurs Oct 12: Reflections

- JNH final paper due by the start of class (10:00 a.m.)
- We will use today’s class time to share your findings.

-----FALL BREAK-----



## V. Causations

### Tues Oct 24: Mapping the interwar period

- McDonough, chaps 3 & 4 (+ documents)

### Thurs Oct 26: Nazism from below

- Allen, *Nazi Seizure of Power*, prefaces & chaps 1-3

### Tues Oct 31: Nazism from below

- Allen, chaps 4-8

### Thurs Nov 2: Nazism from below

- Allen, chaps 9, 10, 20

### Tues Nov 7: Research strategies

- Library workshop with Chris Jones (in our regular classroom)

### Thurs Nov 9: Nazism from above

- Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power*, chaps 1-2

### Tues Nov 14: Nazism from above

- Turner, chaps 3-6

### Thurs Nov 16: Nazism from above

- Turner, chap 7

### Tues Nov 21: Assessing the differences

- Comparative book review due by the start of class (10:00 a.m.)
- We will discuss your conclusions in class.

[Thurs, Nov 23: THANKSGIVING – no class]

## VI. Conclusions

### Tues Nov 28: Project development

- Project proposal due (see separate assignment sheet)

### Thurs Nov 30: Project development

- Bring one draft annotation to class

### Tues Dec 5: Project development

- Phase I of historiography project due by 4 pm (for WM feedback)

### Thurs Dec 7: Contested commemorations

- Press coverage of centenary poppies installation at the Tower of London (Pweb)

### Thurs, Dec 14

- Final draft of historiography project (Phases I & II) due