



HI279:

Experiencing Total War

MWF 9:05-9:55

CAS 222

When faced with the prospect of total destruction, how do human beings respond? What strategies do they devise in order to survive? And what thoughts haunt the mind as they stare down the prospect of death? In this course, you will take a deep dive into what has been called the quintessential experience of the twentieth century: the experience of total war. Our two central concepts, total war and historical experience, are often bandied about but in fact are devilishly tricky to define and measure. We will begin by asking: What do we mean by total war? How is total war distinct from, say, modern war or world war? After becoming immersed in several theories and arguments, you will formulate a working concept that seems most persuasive to you. You will then put it to the test as we investigate the ordeals of WWI and WWII and their lasting effects on the bodies, thoughts, and worldviews of Europe's men, women, and children.

We will examine the massive effect that WWI and WWII have had on numerous aspects of life today—from military strategies and tactics, to our vocabularies, foodways, international law, political philosophy, and art. Each week, you will hone your interpretive skills by analyzing diaries, memoirs, fiction, poetry, film, philosophy and visual art from a historical perspective. Many of the sources we will examine can be treated both as document and as art, and you will learn to do both. This class will challenge you to think across genres and national boundaries. At the end of the semester, we will revisit the concept of total war and reflect on how our understanding of it may have evolved over the course of the term.

Professor Alexis Peri

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30-5:30pm (3:30-4:30pm on dates with lectures at BU's Center for the Study of Europe), Fridays 10-11:30am, & by appointment

Office: 226 Bay State Rd. #203

alexisp4@bu.edu

Course Learning Objectives:

In this class, we will:

- Immerse ourselves in key themes, events, creative and intellectual movements of WWI & WWII.
- Evaluate conflicting scholarly arguments about WWI and WWII, especially with respect to why and how practices of war shifted over time.
- Formulate original arguments built on sound logic and historical evidence.
- Mobilize interpretive concepts like total war, genocide, atrocity, totalitarianism, modernism, postmodernism, existentialism, and the rules of engagement as frameworks for understanding WWI and WWII.
- Analyze primary sources by using tools from historical, literary, visual, and film studies and by considering each artifact's formal features.
- Nuance our understanding of aesthetic expressions--from high art to trench art-- of war's devastation by employing methods from visual studies and art history to modernism and postmodernism.
- Learn to apply creativity to analytical pursuits by using historical imagination and the history of emotion to enrich our understanding of the past.
- Craft our own scholarly questions and create our own works of historical fiction by harnessing the intellectual power of creativity and curiosity.

In meeting these learning objectives, we will engage 2 Hub areas (1) Historical consciousness (2) Aesthetic Exploration as well as the Creativity Toolkit. Their learning outcomes are:

Toolkit:

Creativity and Innovation Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.
2. Students will be able to exercise their own potential for engaging in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work either alone or as part of a team.

Hub Areas:

Historical Consciousness Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will create historical narratives, evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence, and construct historical arguments.
2. Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret primary source material (textual, visual, or aural) using a range of interpretive skills and situating the material in its historical and cultural context.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of religious traditions, intellectual paradigms, forms of political organization, or socio-economic forces, and how these have changed over time.

Aesthetic Exploration Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of notable works in literature and/or the arts, including the cultural contexts in which those works were created, and be able to identify their ongoing significance and relevance.
2. Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills and vocabulary necessary to interpret a work of art (literature, music, visual arts, etc.).
3. Students will produce evaluative, analytical, or creative works that demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics—such as genres, modes, styles, and cultural history— of at least one literary or artistic medium.

Course Materials:

In every class meeting, we will collectively analyze primary sources such as films, photographs, paintings, and historical documents. **All readings are excerpted, scanned, and posted on blackboard except for the books below**, which are available for purchase at the bookstore and on reserve at Mugar Library:

- Shahan Derderian, “Death March: An Armenian Survivor's Memoir of the Genocide of 1915,” *Genocide Library, Volume 3* (2008): H. and K. Majikian Publications. ISBN-10: 0981559468 ISBN-13: 978-0981559469
- *The Diary of David Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). ISBN-10: 0195122852 ISBN-13: 978-0195122855
- Lidiya Ginzburg, *Notes from the Blockade*. Trans. Alan Myers and Angela Livingstone. Emily van Buskirk, ed. (London: Random House, 2017). ISBN-13: 9780099583387

How to Prepare the Readings For Our Weekly Discussions:

Close, critical reading is a major component of this class. We devote at least 1 hour every week (usually on Fridays) entirely to a collective discussion and analysis of the readings. Moreover, students will be asked to show their command of the readings on the midterm, final, and in the storied lives project. With this in mind, read thoroughly and with a pencil. In a notebook, jot down the key points, main arguments, surprising points, and questions). Please **read the texts in the order that they are listed on the syllabus & bring the reading (in digital or hard copy)** to the class period for which it is assigned.

Course Assessments:

In-class Midterm Exam	15%
Virtual Museum Project (~550-650 words)	15%
Storied Lives Project (5 x ~500-words)	20%
Take-Home Final Exam	25%
Attendance & Active Participation (in lecture, discussion, & in-class exercises)	25%

Midterm and Final Exams:

The midterm will be taken in class and is closed book, closed notes. The final exam will be take-home and will be open book, open notes. Study guides will be distributed in advance for both tests. They will be similarly formatted, although the final exam will be longer. The exams will consist of 2 parts:

1. Close reading. By this, I mean the correct identification and a careful, critical analysis of primary sources—namely a). images from class slides or b). assigned class readings.
2. Essay questions. You will be given a historiographical question or debate. For example: how did WWI both threaten and strengthen existing notions of femininity? How did the civilian populations reimagine their identities—personal and national—through their wartime diets? How did the Holocaust foster a crisis of artistic creation among Europe’s intelligentsia? In your essay, you will answer the question posed by developing an original, well supported argument grounded in evidence from lectures and assigned readings.

Virtual Museum Project:

All of the primary sources we use in this course can at once be treated as document and as art. As scholars, we must analyze both the historical and aesthetic features of every artifact in tandem. Select an artifact from the class materials (a medal or uniform, a piece of trench art, a painting, a photograph, a postcard, a poster, etc.) and decide how it should be curated and exhibited in a museum of your

choosing and with a specific target audience in mind. You may want to choose a historical museum, an art museum, a science museum, etc. Study your artifact very closely. Do a close, critical reading of your source (using our class discussions and the close reading exercise on the midterm as a model). Next, research your item's provenance, authorship, ownership, etc. Flesh out your object's story. Finally, hand in the following:

- 1.) an image (or, if not available, a detailed description) of your chosen object
- 2.) a 50-word caption that would accompany the item displayed,
- 3.) 500-600-word exhibit blurb/pamphlet/audio guide clip that would be available to museum patrons. This text should contextualize, interpret, and critique your chosen object, pointing out the major historical and aesthetic features, which will help the museum patron to understand and appreciate the object's significance.
- 4.) footnotes/endnotes of any cited materials in Chicago style.

Tip: one challenge of this project is to convey the rich history of your artifact in very few words. Allow sufficient time to revise and condense your blurb and caption, maximizing the words you are allotted. Additional instructions will be given in class.

Storied Lives Project:¹

To help you cultivate your understanding of total war from an experiential point of view, you will create a historical avatar. Five times during the semester, you will hand in short (500-550-word) testimonies written from his/her perspective and in the first person. These texts must be structured as one of the following genres, which we are studying in this class: diary, memoir, oral testimony, letter, poem, or song. You may change genres over the course of your installments. Start by choosing the following for your avatar:

- Name
- Age in 1914
- Gender
- Occupation
- Nationality
- Religion
- Class

But you must adhere to the following rules:

- Your character must be at least age 8 (and able to write) in 1914 and must survive until 1945
- Once chosen, you cannot change the basic criteria about your character (their age, gender, etc.) You may change their attitudes, occupations, countries of residence, class etc.
- Be creative! But your texts must be as historically accurate as possible. Invent personality traits, attitudes, and experiences for your avatar, but make sure they are factually accurate and historically plausible. Each installment must cite lectures, readings, and slides from which you have drawn information and inspiration--a minimum of 6 citations/installment. Use Chicago style footnotes.
- Your texts should be submitted in electronic format as a Microsoft Word file or a PDF to the instructor via email by the date and time specified below in order to be considered "on time."
 - 2 Entries on WWI must be handed in by: **Oct 11, midnight.**
 - 1 Entry on the interwar period must be handed in by: **Oct 26, midnight**
 - 2 Entries on WWII must be handed in by: **Dec 7, midnight**

¹ This assignment is a modified version of the "Creating Lives Project" created by Kathryn Ciancia of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Edith Sheffer of Stanford University

Attendance & Active Participation:

The most important way to ensure your success in this class is to prepare for, attend, and actively participate in all class meetings. Every week you will discuss primary sources and engage in learning exercises designed to help you hone your analytical skills and deepen your understanding of the materials. Weekly class periods (called “discussions” below) will be entirely devoted to practicing historical analysis. The discussions generally fall on **Fridays**. Moreover, in many class lectures, you will be asked questions or to do small activities—individually or in groups—to enhance your interpretive skills. For instance, you may write a “minute paper” at the end of a lecture, or track a certain theme on an index card while you read an assigned memoir, etc. Your participation grade will be based on your preparedness for and good faith effort on each activity—in lectures and in discussions.

You are allowed 3 unexcused absences from lecture without penalty. Additional, undocumented absences will hurt your grade. Students who miss 5 or more class meetings will be in danger of not passing the course. Student athletes, musicians, actors, employees, and others whose extracurricular activities may conflict with class must tell me within **first 2 weeks** (14 days) of the semester what dates they will miss, so that arrangements can be made for them to make up the work. They also should notify me as soon as possible if conflicts emerge because of postseason play, performances, etc. Any student who is unable to take the midterm at the scheduled times must give me 2 weeks (14 days) prior notice for rescheduling. Unfortunately, some of our class meetings fall on **religious holidays**. Please look in advance and let me know within the first **2 weeks** of the semester (14 days) if you will need to be excused from class for religious observance, so that we can arrange for you to make up for any discussions, lectures, or deadlines you will miss.

Additional Class Policies:

Citation Style for all Written Assignments (excluding in-class midterm):

For all of your written assignments (i.e. museum project, storied lives project, and take-home final exam etc.), you must cite all evidence and examples that you present in footnotes or endnotes formatted in Chicago Style. Use footnotes or endnotes, not a bibliography (because your complete notes will contain all the necessary information). New to Chicago Style? There is a **citation guideline** posted on Blackboard.

Grading:

Grade Rubrics for all written assignments (excluding the midterm and final) are posted on Blackboard in advance, so you can see how you will be assessed. Study guides will be posted for the midterm and final.

Late Work:

All assignments must be completed and submitted on time. Exceptions will be made only in dire circumstances. Formal assignments will be penalized by one third of a letter grade for each day (including weekends) that your work is late (e.g., a B becomes a B-, a C+ becomes a C, etc., for each late day). Work that is 6 or more days late will not be accepted.

Extensions:

I do not grant extensions unless there is a compelling reason and sufficient notice (4 or more days in advance). Please do not ask for a last-minute extension a day or two before a deadline. I only grant extensions in the case of an emergency (such as a documented medical emergency—not just an illness—or a sudden family crisis or death that involves immediate travel).

Laptops and Mobile Devices:

Laptops may be used to take notes and consult the assigned readings. Cell phones and other mobile devices must be silenced and cannot be used at any time. If students are using laptops or other devices for purposes other than taking notes (i.e. surfing the web, texting, etc.), this privilege will be immediately revoked.

Academic Honesty:

Be sure to footnote all sources that you quote, paraphrase, or consult on assignments. This includes information from books, webpages, articles, lectures, etc. The act of presenting someone else's ideas, research, or writings as one's own is taken very seriously in this course. All suspected academic misconduct will be reported to the Dean's Office. As BU students, you are bound by the guidelines set down by the CAS Academic Conduct Code: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>. As you take notes, be careful to distinguish between your words and thoughts and those of others, and be sure to properly acknowledge information you paraphrase by citing the source of that information.

Accommodations:

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations should contact the Disability Services office as early in the semester as possible. <http://www.bu.edu/disability/>. All of our discussions and accommodations will remain confidential.

Additional Resources for Success:

All of us need a little help with writing, research, and mastering historical material. There are many places on campus that offer tutoring and writing help, including assistance for English Language Learners. Look ahead and make appointments before the paper and project deadlines. Tutors are available at the Educational Resource Center <http://www.bu.edu/erc/>. Additional writing help is offered through other offices listed here: <http://www.bu.edu/erc/writingassistance/additional-writing-assistance/>



Otto Dix, Storm troopers advancing under Gas, 1924

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

UNIT 1: WWI 1914-1918

WEEK 1

- Sept 2: NO CLASS. LABOR DAY
Sept 4: **Lecture: What is Total War? What are we Doing in this Class?**
Sept 6: **Lecture: "This Splendid War!" Begins**
- "The Hymn of Hate"

WEEK 2

- Sept 9: **Lecture: Combat Experience**
Sept 11: **Lecture: Mangled Bodies, Shattered Minds**
Sept 13: **Discussion:**
- Selected war songs
 - Selected Poems in: John Silkin, ed. *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1979).

WEEK 3

- Sept 16: **Discussion:**
- A.F. Wedd, *German Students' War Letters*, ed. Philipp Wiktor (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1929), 13, 23-24, 30-38, 104-113
 - *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen*, ed. Laurence Housman (Philadelphia: E.P. Dutton & Co., 2002).
- Sept 18: **Lecture: Lost Youth: Children at War**
Sept 20: **Discussion:**
- Diary of Piette Kuhr in: *Stolen Voices: Young People's Diaries, from World War I to Iraq*, eds. Zlata Filipovic and Melanie Challenger (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

MIDTERM STUDY GUIDE DISTRIBUTED

WEEK 4

- Sept 23: **Lecture: Women at War**
Sept 25: **Lecture: Femininities, and Masculinities under Fire**
Sept 27: **Discussion:**
- Vera Brittain, *War Diary: Chronicle of Youth 1913-1917* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1981).
 - Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiography Study of the Years 1900-1925* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).
 - Florence Farmborough, *Nurse at the Russian Front: A Diary, 1914-1918* (New York: Random House, 1974).

WEEK 5

- Sept 30: **Lecture: Taste of War, I: Food Politics**
Oct 2: **Lecture: Life in Captivity, I**
Oct 4: NO CLASS. There is no reading this week. Use the time to prepare for the midterm. Office hours for Oct 4 are canceled because I will be out the country

WEEK 6

Oct 7: IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

Oct 9: **Lecture: “A Crime without a Name”**

Oct 11: **Discussion:**

- Shahan Derderian, *Death March: An Armenian Survivor’s Memoir of the Genocide of 1915*, trans. Ishkhan Jinbashian (Studio City: H. & K. Publications, 2008).
- Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province: an American Diplomat’s Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917*, intro. Susan K. Blair (New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1989).

Oct 11, midnight: LAST CHANCE TO TURN IN 2 INSTALLMENTS (ON WWI) FOR STORIED LIVES PROJECT

Email your work in Microsoft Word or pdf format (do not use Google Docs) to the instructor with your 1st initial & last name in the file name. Please only send 1 file (include both entries in the same file).

WEEK 7

Oct. 14: NO CLASS. COLUMBUS DAY

Tues. Oct 15: **Lecture: Artists Respond, I**

Oct 16: **Lecture: Intellectuals Respond, I**

- T.S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men” (1925)

Oct 18: **Discussion:**

- Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (1934-40) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964).
- Paul Valery, “First Letter,” *Crisis of the Mind* (1919)
- Bertrand Russell, *On Modern Uncertainty* (1932)
- Freud-Einstein Exchange in: *Why War?*, Stuart Gilbert, ed. (Paris: League of Nations, 1933).



Salvador Dali, *The Face of War* (1940-1)

UNIT 2: WWII, 1939-1945

WEEK 8

Oct 21: **Lecture: A Broken World: The Road to WWII**

Oct 23: **Lecture: Combat by Land, Sea, and Air**

Oct 25: **Discussion:**

- Selected Poems & Songs
- Marcus Cowper, ed. *The Words of War: British Forces' Personal Letters and Diaries during the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2009).

Oct 26, midnight: LAST CHANCE TO TURN IN 1 INSTALLMENT (ON INTERWAR PERIOD) FOR STORIED LIVES PROJECT

Email your work in Microsoft Word or pdf format (do not use Google Docs) to the instructor with your 1st initial & last name in the file name.

WEEK 9

Oct 28: **Lecture: “Good War” in the West**

Oct 30: **Lecture: “War of Annihilation” in the East**

Nov 1: **Discussion:**

- Jim Riordan, ed. *Letters from the Dead: Last Letters from Soviet Men and Women who Died Fighting the Nazis, 1941-45* (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2003).
- Reinhold Busch, ed. *Survivors of Stalingrad: Eyewitness Accounts from the Sixth Army* (London: Frontline Books, 2014).

WEEK 10

Nov 4: **Lecture: Women on the Frontlines**

Nov 6: **Discussion:**

- Anna Timofeeva-Egorova, *Red Sky, Black Death: A Soviet Woman Pilot's Memoir of the Eastern Front* (Bloomington: Slavica, 2009), 110-118, 183-198.
- In-class Screening of Oral History Clips from the Blavatnik Archive Foundation

Nov 8: **Discussion: Spies, Partisans, & Special Ops**

- Russell Miller, *Behind the Lines: The Oral History of Special Operations in World War II* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).
- Agnes Humbert, *Resistance: A Woman's Journal of Struggle and Defiance in Occupied France* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).

Nov 9, midnight: MUSEUM PROJECT DUE

Email your project in Microsoft Word or pdf format (do not use Google Docs) to the instructor with your 1st initial & last name in the file name. Send only 1 file (put your image, caption, and blurb in the same file).

WEEK 11

Nov 11: **Lecture: Taste of War, II**

Nov 13: **Lecture: Civilians under Siege**

Nov 15: **Discussion:**

- Sandra Koa Wing, ed. *Our Longest Days: A People's History of the Second World War* (London: Profile Books, 2008).
- Marie-Louise Osmont, *The Normandy Diary of Marie-Louise Osmont, 1940-1944* (New York: Random House: 1994).

WEEK 12

Nov 18:

Discussion:

- Ursula von Kardorff, *Diary of a Nightmare, Berlin 1942-1945* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965).

Nov 20:

Lecture: Life in Captivity, II

Nov 22:

Discussion:

- Lidiya Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary* (London: Harvill Press, 1995)
- Giovanni Guareschi, *My Secret Diary, 1943-1945* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy 1958)

WEEK 13

Nov 25:

NO CLASS. FINAL EXAM STUDY GUIDE POSTED.

Nov. 27

NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING

Nov 29:

NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14

Dec 2:

Lecture: A Crime *with* a Name: Genocide, II

Dec 4:

Lecture: Artists & Intellectuals Respond, II

Dec 6:

Discussion:

- *The Diary of David Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). All. Pages to Focus on: 1-52, 147-end

Dec 7, midnight. LAST CHANCE TO TURN IN 2 INSTALLMENTS ON WWII FOR STORIED LIVES PROJECT.

Please email your work in Microsoft Word or pdf format (do not use Google Docs) to the instructor with your 1st initial & last name in the file name. Please only send 1 file (include both entries in the same file).

WEEK 15

Dec 9:

Discussion:

- Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944)
- Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism: Part III of The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) (Orlando: Harcourt Press, 1994)
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957)

Dec 11:

Final Discussion & Review: How do we Understand Total War?

FINAL EXAM DISTRIBUTED

Dec 16, midnight: TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE

Email your exam in Microsoft Word or pdf format (do not use Google Docs) to the instructor with your 1st initial & last name in the file name. Please only send 1 file ((include all your answers in the same file).