

The Culture of World War I

Professor James H. Johnson

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Department of History, Rm. 403

226 Bay State Road

Telephone: 353-2554

Email: jhj@bu.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00-4:00, Thursdays 1:30-2:30, and by appointment

The Culture of World War I approaches this watershed moment in European history through works of literature, music, and art. The course's three chronological divisions—the lead-up to war, the experience of war, and its aftermath—will include representative works from prominent composers, artists, novelists, and poets. Principal historical themes of the course are: the widespread conviction that war would cleanse and regenerate Europe; the brutally inglorious reality of trench conditions, chemical weapons, and the destruction of cultural patrimony; the ideals combatants held and the effects of events upon them; and the cultural landscape after the war. A textbook will ground discussions in events. Additional readings will include excerpts from memoirs, essays, interviews, and analyses. Films tied to major themes of the course will be shown in the Honors College seminar room on selected Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. Attendance is encouraged but not required.

Participation – The class will be run as a seminar, with daily discussion expected from all students. Listen to the music and study the artworks actively and attentively, with the same concentration you would devote to a difficult piece of writing. If there are words, follow text as you listen. There will be quizzes on your readings from Martin Gilbert's *The First World War*. Please jot notes to yourself as you read, look, and listen.

Laptops are not permitted in class. Please print all required readings posted on Blackboard and bring them with you to class for discussion. If you take reading notes on your computer, please print these as well to refer to during discussion.

Grades - Final grades will be based on the following assignments:

- Four 2-3 page writing exercises - 20%
- Two class presentations -20%
- Three reading quizzes - 15%
- One 5-6 page essay - 15%
- One 6-8 page essay - 20%
- Participation - 10%

Class presentations - There will be two presentations by each student during the semester. Seven students will speak about a single work of art, and the other seven will speak about a single song from the day's assignment. You will work in pairs for your second presentation; each pair will choose two poems from the day's assignment to discuss. Single presentations should be no more than 10 minutes long; pairs

should take no more than 15 minutes.

Academic Conduct - I expect the work you perform in this course to be your own. Presenting the work of someone else as your own is plagiarism, and it will be punished by an F for the assignment and possibly for the course as well, with possible further sanctions by the University Academic Conduct Committee.

Plagiarism includes copying the work of others, restating the work of others without citing the source, and collaborating with others without acknowledging their contribution. A detailed discussion with examples appears in the *Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code* (<http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/#Plagiarism>). It is your responsibility to read these pages carefully and know exactly what constitutes plagiarism.

All websites consulted for use in written work must be acknowledged in your papers. Unacknowledged use of material from the internet will be considered plagiarism and punished as such.

Required Readings

Martin Gilbert, *The First World War. A Complete History* (Henry Holt and Company)
Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War* (Hill & Wang)
The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry (Penguin Classics)
Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (Anchor Books)
Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (Broadview Press)
Norbert Wolf, *Expressionism* (Taschen)
Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* (New Directions)

Schedule of Classes

January 17 - Introduction to the course

Assigned listening: Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring* (1913) (Naxos Music Library 8.550472)

Assigned reading: Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring*, "Anthology" (93-104)

Writing exercise #1, due January 24 (2-3 pages, single-spaced). Select one section from the *Rite of Spring* to describe in terms of mood, tone, and emotional content. What are the means Stravinsky employs to achieve these effects? How do these qualities connect with the themes Eksteins discusses in *Rites of Spring*?

January 18 - Film, "Keeping Score - Revolutions in Music: Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring' (2006)

January 19 - Music on the eve of the war

Assigned reading: Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, "Preface," "Paris" (xiii-xvi, 9-55)

January 19 - Boston Symphony Orchestra - Copland, Tomasi, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Stravinsky

January 24 - The prewar mood

Assigned reading: Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (1-66)

Writing exercise #1 due

January 25 - Film, "The White Ribbon" (2009)

January 26 - Politics on the eve of the war

Assigned reading: Martin Gilbert, *The First World War*, "Prelude to War" (1-15), "Wild with Joy" (16-34)

January 31 - Art on the eve of the war

Assigned reading: Norbert Wolf, *Expressionism*, "Metaphysical German Meatloaf" (6-25)

Writing exercise #2, due February 7 (2-3 pages, single-spaced). Select one painting from Wolf, *Expressionism* to discuss. Include a one-paragraph biographical description of the artist, the reason you have selected this painting, and a description of its style, mood, and emotional effect. How does the painter accomplish this effect? For biographical information, use the Oxford Art Online database, accessible through the BU Mugar Library website (click *Grove Art Online* on Electronic Databases webpage). Be sure to document any source you consult (e.g., *Grove Art Online*, *Oxford Companion to Western Art*, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, etc.).

February 1 - Visit to the Museum of Fine Arts - 6:30 p.m.

February 2 - Art on the eve of the war (presentations)

February 7 - Art on the eve of the war (presentations)

Writing exercise #2 due

February 9 - Approaches to the war

Assigned reading: Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau & Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, "Introduction" (1-12), "Battle, Combat, Violence" (15-44)

Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, "The First Hours of the War of 1914" (214-37)

February 14 - Outbreak of war

Assigned reading: Martin Gilbert, *The First World War*, "The Opening Struggle" (35-54), "From Mons to the Marne" (55-77), "Digging In: The Start of Trench Warfare" (78-100)

Reading quiz #1

Essay #1 topics distributed

February 15 - Documentary, "The First World War" (2004): Episode 1, "To Arms-1914"; Episode 2, "Under the Eagle-1914-1915"; Episode 3, "Global War-1914-1916"; Episode 4, "Jihad-1914-1916"

February 16 - Fervor for war

Assigned reading: Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (67-81)

Ernst Lissauer, "Chant of Hate" (1914)
Werner Sombart, "We have nothing against the Frenchman" (1914)
Beatrice T. Barry, "Answering the Chant of Hate" (1914)
Giovanni Papini, "The War as a Source of National Renewal" (1914)
Filippo T. Marinetti, "The War as the Catharsis of Italian Society" (1914)
Manifesto of the Ninety-Three (1914)
Romain Rolland, "Pro Aris" (1914)

February 21 - No class

February 23 - Interpreting war fervor

Assigned reading: Audoin-Rouzeau & Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, "Civilisation, barbarism and war fervour" (113-58)

Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915)

Essay #1 due (5-6 pages)

February 28 - Experience of the war

Assigned reading: Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (82-118)

From *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*:

Rupert Brooke, "1914: Peace" (11)

_____, "1914: Safety" (29)

_____, "1914: The Soldier" (108)

Isaac Rosenberg, "On Receiving the First News of the War" (5)

John Freeman, "Happy is England Now" (12)

Rudyard Kipling, "For All We Have and Are" (13-14)

Writing exercise #3, due March 6 (2-3 pages, single-spaced). Select one poem from those listed on the syllabus. Include a one-paragraph biographical description of the poet, the reason you have selected the poem, and a description of its tone, diction, and emotional effect. How does the poet accomplish this effect? For biographical detail, use the Gale Literary Databases, accessible through the BU Mugar Library website (click *Contemporary Authors* on Electronic Databases webpage). Be sure to document any source you consult (e.g., *Contemporary Authors*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*).

February 29 - Film, "Paths of Glory" (1957)

March 1 - Experience of the war (presentations)

Assigned reading: Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (119-65)

From *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*:

Robert Graves, "The Survivor Comes Home" (171-72)

Siegfried Sassoon, "The Kiss" (31)

_____, "The Redeemer" (62-63)

Charles Hamilton Sorley, "All the Hills and Vales Along" (33)

Wilfred Owen, "The Send-off" (44)

_____, "Exposure" (55-57)

_____, "Greater Love" (93-94)

March 6 - Experience of the war (presentations)

Assigned reading: Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (166-91)

From *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*:

Edgell Rickword, "Trench Poets" (98)

May Herschel-Clark, "The Mother" (109)

Isaac Rosenberg, "Returning, We Hear the Larks" (65)

Wilfred Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth" (131)

_____, "Dulce et Decorum est" (141-42)

_____, "Disabled" (252-53)

Writing exercise #3 due

March 8 - Course of the war

Assigned reading: Martin Gilbert, *The First World War*, "The Entente in Danger" (154-175), "This War Will End at Verdun" (224-43)

Audoin-Rouzeau & Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, "Civilians: atrocities and occupation" (45-69)

March 20 - Course of the war

Assigned reading: Martin Gilbert, *The First World War*, "The Battle of the Somme" (258-81), "War on Every Front" (282-300)

Audoin-Rouzeau & Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, "The camp phenomenon: the internment of civilians and military prisoners" (70-93)

Reading quiz #2

March 21 - Documentary, "The First World War" (2004): Episode 5, "Shackled to a Corpse, 1914-1915"; Episode 6, "Breaking the Deadlock, 1915-1917"

March 22 - Experience of the war

Assigned reading: Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (193-225)

Assigned listening: from *War's Embers*:

Finzi, Only a man harrowing clods

Gurney, The two corbies

Gurney, Black Stichel

Gurney, Blawearly

Gurney, The Fiddler of Dooney

Gurney, Goodnight to the meadow

Farrar, The wanderer's song

Farrar, Silent noon

Writing exercise #4, due March 29 (2-3 pages, single-spaced). Select one song from *War's Embers* from those listed on the syllabus. Include a one-paragraph biographical description of the composer, the reason you have made this selection, and a description of its mood, tone, and

emotional effect. How does the composer accomplish this effect? For biographical detail, use the Oxford Music Online website, accessible through the BU Mugar Library website (click *Grove Music* on Electronic Databases webpage). Be sure to document any source you consult (e.g., *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, *Grove Music Online*, *The Oxford Companion to Music*).

March 27 -The experience of war (presentations)

Assigned reading: Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (225-54)

Assigned listening: from *War's Embers*:

Farrar, The roadside fire
Gurney, The ship
Browne, Arabia
Browne, Diaphenia
Gurney, Cathleen ni Houlihan
Gurney, Edward, Edward
Gurney, The night of Trafalgar
Gurney, Thou didst delight my eyes

March 29 -Experience of the war (presentations)

Assigned reading: Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (255-78)

Assigned listening: from *War's Embers*:

Farrar, Brittany
Farrar, Come you, Mary
Farrar, Who would shepherd pipes
Kelly, Shall I compare thee?
Gurney, To violets
Gurney, Last hours
Browne, Epitaph on Salathiel Pavy
Butterworth, Requiescat
Browne, To Gratianta dancing and singing

Writing exercise #4 due

April 3 - Dada - Assignment to be announced

April 4 - Films of the Avant-Garde (1924-39)

April 5 - Dada - Assignment to be announced

April 10 - The war's last months

Assigned reading: Gilbert, *The First World War*, "The Intensification of the War" (301-23), "The Central Powers on the Verge of Triumph" (393-405), "Germany's Last Great Onslaught" (406-15)

April 11 - Documentary, "The First World War" (2004): Episode 7, "Blockade, 1916-1917"; Episode 8, "Revolution, 1917"; Episode 9, "Germany's Last Gamble, 1918"; Episode 10, "War Without End"

April 12 - The war's end and armistice

Assigned reading: Gilbert, *The First World War*, "The Turn of the Tide" (454-72), "The Collapse of the Central Powers" (473-96), "The Final Armistice" (497-504)

Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, "Conclusion: 'You didn't see anything in the 1920s and 1930s'" (226-37)

Reading quiz #3

April 17 - Postwar trauma

Assigned reading: Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (47-118)

April 18 - Life and Nothing But (1989)

April 19 - Postwar trauma

Assigned reading: Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, "Historicizing Grief" (175-81), "Collective Mourning" (182-202), "Personal Bereavement" (203-25)

April 24 - Postwar culture

Assigned reading: Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* (1-58)

Assigned viewing: Max Beckman, *Family Picture* (1920)
_____, *Self-Portrait* (1927)

Essay #2 topics distributed

April 25 - Film, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1920)

April 26 - Postwar culture

Assigned reading: Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* (94-158)

Assigned viewing: George Grosz, *Grey Day* (1921)
_____, *Eclipse of the Sun* (1926)
_____, *The Pillars of Society* (1926)

May 1 - Postwar culture

Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* (158-203, 298-318, 343-54, 395-435)

Assigned viewing: Otto Dix, *Grosstadt Triptychon* (1928)
_____, *War-Triptych* (1929-32)

Wednesday, May 9 - Essay #2 due (6-8 pages) in my office by 12 noon