

English 608.1
The Great War
Spring 2016; Wednesdays 4-6:50

Professor: Celia Marshik
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4, Thursdays 2:30-4 and by appointment
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Course Description:

World War I has been described as a particularly “literary” war because of the sheer volume of poetry and fiction it inspired. But the war also left its impact on music, the visual arts and nonfiction: the music hall, cinema, painters, photographers and historians all vied to record and interpret the events of 1914-1918. Those who took the war as their subject had to wrestle with numerous questions: how to represent death and destruction without unduly aestheticizing pain and trauma; how to attend to the experiences of individuals caught up in historical events that emphasized collectives (armies, workers, “the nation”); whether and how to confront the tensions created by class, race and gender at home and at the front; and how to present combat to audiences that had largely experienced the war from afar. This course will consider these questions and others as we assess the relationship between historical events and cultural production. We’ll also consider how the war’s meaning evolved over the course of the twentieth century. This seminar is affiliated with the Dean’s Lecture Series on “Un/Conventional War” for spring; that means we’ll attend, as a group, three lectures in the Humanities Institute by experts on various aspects of modern war and we may also meet with the other seminars linked to the lecture series.

Required Texts (available at the campus bookstore):

cummings, e. e.	<i>The Enormous Room</i>
Daly, Victor	<i>Not Only War: A Story of Two Great Conflicts</i>
Hemingway, Ernest	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i>
Remarque, Erich	<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>
Smith, Helen Zenna	<i>Not So Quiet . . . Stepdaughters of War</i>
Walter, George	<i>The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry</i>
West, Rebecca	<i>The Return of the Soldier</i>
Woolf, Virginia	<i>Mrs Dalloway</i>

Required Film (available through YouTube, Amazon or the library):

The Big Parade (Dir. King Vidor. MGM, 1925)

Additional readings are available on-line through Blackboard

Course Requirements

Participation and leading class discussion with a posted question: 20%

With the exception of days when we attend a lecture, we will begin each meeting with questions presented by members of the class. On the evening or morning before we meet, a class member will formulate detailed questions about the readings. We will use these questions to initiate and lead discussion. Be sure that your question refers to specific passages in the readings. In your question, you are required to comment on the reading in a way that expresses your analysis of it in relation to the topics in our class. You can pose a question that will lead the seminar to examine closely the language in the reading or compare it to other critical materials in the seminar. Your question can also express what you find most intense, meaningful, or puzzling about the reading. Your question needs to be posted in the course website on Blackboard in advance of the seminar meeting.

Oral presentation (20 minutes) and written copy (4-5 pages): 30%

You will give one oral presentation of an argument (thesis) about a text or topic you select. This text might be something on the syllabus or something you bring in; because our reading schedule does not pretend to exhaust the material published in the area, it could also be scholarship on war itself.

In your presentation, you must provide a close reading the text that shows how it both supports your argument and generates it. It is important that you include, as part of your argument and analysis, some topics and concepts from our shared readings. As part of your analysis, you may also provide any background elements that will enhance our understanding of the text (e.g., genre, biographical information about the writer, artist or director). You will conclude your presentation with one question for the class that will allow us to discuss your selected text in relation to your presentation, as well as topics and issues we've discussed in previous seminar meetings. You may include supplemental visual materials or audio recordings (in PowerPoint or another format) to enhance your argument and analysis. However do not let these supplemental materials make you lose focus on analyzing your selected text.

After your presentation, you will turn in a written (typed and double-spaced) copy of it. The written copy may be either an outline or a coherent narrative (like an essay). However, when you give your presentation in class do not just read it from your written copy. Instead, please give it as a discussion while looking at and talking directly to everyone in the seminar.

Research paper (20-25 pages): 50%

This research essay may depart from or extend some parts of your oral presentation; you can also take up a completely different topic. You are to refer to critical materials (i.e., articles, essays, book chapters, etc.) to support your analysis. In other words, you will draw to some extent on secondary sources to support your analysis of your selected text(s). The topic of your paper is entirely up to you, but students who intend to apply this course toward the Cultural Studies Certificate must write a seminar paper relevant to that program.

University Policies

DSS assistance:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Course Calendar

Items marked with one asterisk can be found on Blackboard

- January 27** Introduction to the course; sign-up for posted questions
Screening and discussion of Charlie Chaplin's *Shoulder Arms* (Dir. Charles Chaplin. First National Pictures, 1918)
- February 3** Cornwall, "The First World War"*
Keegan, "A European Tragedy"*
Eksteins, "Rites of War"*
Elaine Scarry, "The Structure of War"* (discussion with SPN 612)
Musical text: "The Boys of the Old Brigade"
- February 10** *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, Sections 1 ("Your Country Needs You") and 2 ("Somewhere in France")
Paul Fussell, "A Satire of Circumstance" and "Oh What a Literary War"*
Musical text: "Boys in Khaki, Boys in Blue"
- February 17** *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, Sections 3 ("Action") and 4 ("Blighty"). Also Wilfred Owen's "Disabled" (252-3)
Read and explore "Experiences of Colonial Troops"*
Musical text: "Your King and Country Want You"
- February 24** Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*
Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller"*
Cole, "My Killed Friends Are with Me Where I Go"*
- March 2** Patrick Deer talk
Introduction and chapter 1 of *Culture in Camouflage**
Watch: *The Big Parade* (Dir. King Vidor. MGM, 1925)
PLEASE NOTE: you need to view the film before this date
Michael Isenberg, "The Great War Viewed from the Twenties"*
Leslie DeBauche, "The United States' Film Industry and WWI"*
Optional: Marcus, "The Great War in 20th Century Cinema"*

- March 9** Daly, *Not Only War: A Story of Two Great Conflicts*
 Dunbar-Nelson, *Mine Eyes Have Seen* (available through Google Books)
 Whalan, “Not only War: the First World War and African American Literature”^{*}
Optional: Hill, “The Black Man’s Bit”^{*}
- March 16** **NO CLASS (Spring Recess)**
- March 23** Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*
 Saint-Amour, “Perpetual Suspense: Virginia Woolf’s Wartime Gothic”^{*}
 Meyer, “Not Septimus Now: wives of disabled veterans and cultural memory of the First World War in Britain”^{*}
Optional: Showalter, “Male Hysteria”^{*}
- March 30** David Silbey talk
 “‘A Sense of the Round World’: The workers, Britain, Europe and the Empire” (*The British Working Class & Enthusiasm for the War*)^{*}
 “A War of Frontier and Empire” from *A War of Frontier and Empire*^{*}
 West, *Return of the Soldier*
 Brittain, “Camberwell versus Death”^{*}
 May Wedderburn Cannan, “Lamplight” (*TBP*)
- April 6** Smith, *Not So Quiet. . . Stepdaughters of War*
 Afterword by Jane Marcus
 Jameson, “War and Representation”^{*}
Optional: Marshik, “The Modernist Mackintosh”^{*}
Musical text: “Just Before the Battle”
- April 13** Hemingway, *Farewell to Arms*
 Brown, “Martial Art”^{*}
- April 20** Mariano Siskind talk
 “Global Modernism and War”^{*}
 Cummings, *The Enormous Room*
- April 27** Hanley, “The German Prisoner”^{*}
 Kipling, “Mary Postgate”^{*}
 La Motte, “Women and Wives”^{*}
 Cummings, “I Sing of Olaf”^{*}
 Hall, “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself”^{*}
 Doan, “Topsy-Turveydom”^{*}
- May 4** Siegfried Sassoon, “On Passing the New Menin Gate”^{*}, Edmund Blunden, “The Midnight Skaters” (*TPB*); Ted Hughes, “Six Young Men”^{*}, Philip Larkin, “MCMXIV”^{*}, Seamus Heaney, “In Memoriam”^{*}
Presentations of final papers

Friday, May 13: Research Paper due in my mailbox by 4 pm