

**Course Description**

On June 28, 1914 a car carrying the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie momentarily stopped on a narrow street in Sarajevo, Serbia. Before the driver could get underway again, Gavrillo Princip, a Serbian revolutionary, fired two shots at the car. The first shot killed the Archduke; the second killed Sophie. In a matter of months, all the major states of Europe were engulfed in what became known as *The Great War*. By the time the warring parties finally declared an “Armistice” on November 11, 1918, the conflict had spread across the globe. Negotiations to find a lasting settlement dragged on until June 28, 1919, when the combatants finally signed a total of nine treaties – the most famous of which was the Treaty of Versailles – exactly five years after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. But the treaties did not really settle anything; thirty years after the “war to end all wars” had ended, the world was once again at war. The *First World War* as we now call it, was a cataclysmic event that in the space of five short years changed the course of world history. While we know *what happened* over those terrible five years, we still are not entirely sure *why it happened*. This course will examine a variety of questions that historians have raised about the “Great War”.

**Course Prerequisites and Requirements:**

Other than upper division standing, there are no course prerequisites for enrolling in this course.

**Exams and Written Assignments:**

The only exam in the course is the **final exam, which is on June 12th, at 8:00 – 11:00 am.**

There will be **two written assignments** that must be turned in at lecture on the assigned date. Topics and the due dates for these assignments are discussed below.

**Clickers and Class Participation**

Each student will be expected to have a **Clicker**. Clickers will be used to respond to questions posed during the lecture. There will be *three multiple choice questions* during the course of each lecture. You get one point simply showing up; you get an additional point for each correct answer. The total number of points accumulated during the quarter is determines the grade for class participation.

Clickers can be purchased from the UCR Bookstore. You should register your clicker at [clickers.ucr.edu](http://clickers.ucr.edu). Note that clicker registration must be renewed each quarter. If you use someone else’s clicker, make sure you report the number of the clicker you are using on the attendance sheets distributed during the first two weeks in class

To allow for the inevitable bugs to be worked out, here will be a *two week grace period* before the clicker responses are entered my gradebook. After that the results of each week’s responses will be posted on iLearn. It is **YOUR** responsibility to let me know if your clicker is not operating properly.

**Course Grade**

The final grade in the course will be based on the two written assignments (roughly 40%); the final exam (roughly 40%), and number of points you have earned for clicker responses during lecture (roughly 20%).

**Class Website on iLearn**

There is a course website at [iLearn.ucr.edu](http://iLearn.ucr.edu). The website includes: a copy of this syllabus, instructions for the writing assignments; periodic announcements (including materials for exams), and slides of each lecture in the Course Material section. The slides are available in Adobe Acrobat files that can either be viewed on the web or downloaded to your personal computer and printed for your personal use. Please do not try to print these slides from the printers in the UCR computer labs! You can also register your clicker through the iLearn website.

**Office Hours**

My office is room 7705 in the Humanities and Social Sciences building. My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays right before class and in the afternoon from 1:30 to 3:30. The easiest way to reach me is by E-mail at [roger.ransom@ucr.edu](mailto:roger.ransom@ucr.edu). I encourage any student who has a question about the class to E-mail me at this address.

Lindsay Johnson, who can be reached at [Ljohn002@student.ucr.edu](mailto:Ljohn002@student.ucr.edu), is the class Teaching Assistant. Lindsay is available for consultation on your writing assignments, and to answer any questions you might have about the course. Her office is HMNSS 2301 and her office hours are Tuesdays 1:00-3:00 and Thursdays 1:00-2:00

**Textbooks and Other Books**

In an effort to obtain a balance between breadth of reading material and the dictates of both time and the pocketbook, students can choose from a number of possible books for the course. The books are described below, and I strongly recommend that students consider the booklist carefully before purchasing any books.

**Books for the Required Reading Assignments:**

Hew Strachan, editor, *World War I: Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*. [27.50 from Amazon]

If I were to recommend one source book on the Great War, this would be it. The 23 essays this book not only include materials pertaining to *all* of the important topics covered in the course; they also introduces you to a number of the most eminent historians of the Great War. In addition to the information in each essay, each of the authors provide bibliographic “doors” to open a whole world of additional historical readings on the topic. This book will be useful not only as the required reading for lecture, but as a background for the paper assignments as well. I regard this as the one *required* book in the course.

Michael J. Lyons, *World War I: A Short History*, Second Edition. [\$64.00 on Amazon]

As the title suggests, this is a “short” history, which provides very basic elements to follow the lectures. The great virtue of this book is that it is a concise textbook that is clear and easy to read. The downside is that, because it is considered a textbook, it costs substantially more than any of the other books I am recommending. That said, if you simply want to get you through the *required reading*, and you are one of those students who are more comfortable when the reading assignments to go hand in hand with the lecture notes, I strongly suggest you purchase Lyons.

**Alternate Choices for the Required Reading Assignments:**

If you are willing to tackle more challenging reading material, you might consider buying either or both of the books by described below. However, one should note that these authors are writing to an audience that extends well beyond the classroom, and it therefore requires a greater effort on your part to determine exactly which chapter[s] best fits with a particular section of the course.

Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History*. [\$15.30 from Amazon]

While Martin Gilbert’s history is not as “complete” as its subtitle suggests, I regard this book as one of the very best general-purpose histories of the First World War. Gilbert presents the war largely through the eyes of the men who fought it. He does an excellent job of covering the battles, and for those who want to have a more complete sense of the “experience” of the war, without as heavy an emphasis on strategy and tactics, this book is an excellent addition to your personal library.

John Keegan, *The First World War* [\$11.43 from Amazon.]

John Keegan’s book on the First World War provides an up to date interpretation of the military aspects of the war. Keegan is one of the pre-eminent military historians of our time. If you are interested in understanding the strategy, tactics, weapons and the *real politick* involved in the war; this would be a good book to supplement the readings in the Strachan that is required.

**Books and Video Support for the Paper Assignments:**

The paper topics are designed on the assumption that the student will obtain at least one additional book. I suggest you look at the assignments (which are posted on iLearn) and decide which book you will base your papers on.

Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I*. [\$18.11 from Amazon]

In the first chapter of his book, Niall Ferguson poses ten “questions” which he claims remain unanswered by historians of the Great War. Ferguson’s questions form the basis for one set of paper assignments.

Hew Strachan, *The First World War: An Illustrated History*. [\$11.81 from Amazon]

Although at first glance the title of this book looks like the title of the volume of essays edited by Strachan described above, this is in fact a one-volume condensation of a much longer history of the war written by Strachan himself. In this book, Strachan puts forward a view of the war that is in some ways markedly different from that in the other books assigned in the course. The book is divided into ten chapters, several of which form the basis for the second theme of paper assignments. There is a set of four DVDs edited by Jonathan Lewis that are designed to accompany each chapter in the “illustrated history.” [See below]

Jonathan Lewis, *The First World War* [A Four DVD set available through Amazon for \$34.99]

Jonathan Lewis narrated and produced this ten episode series that is based on Strachan's history of the war. Each episode exactly matches one of the chapters Strachan's book. The videos offer an excellent visual presentation of the war. While it is not essential for either the class lectures or the paper assignments; Lewis' visual presentation of material can serve as a valuable resource for the paper assignment – particularly if you choose one of the chapters towards the end of the book. [A word of warning: if you decide to choose this option, order early, because it may take up to a week to get the video.]

**Paper Assignments:**

There two writing assignments due over the course of the quarter. Each assignment will offer the student a choice of writing an essay based either on Ferguson's *Pity of War*; or on Strachan's *The First World War: An Illustrated History* [and, if you choose to use it, the Video by Jonathan Lewis]. Papers must be at least 5 pages long. To facilitate grading, the class will be divided into **four groups** according to the **last name** of each student. Each group has a specific assignment and due date. Papers must be turned in at the class lecture on the day due for YOUR group.

**The group definitions and due dates for assignments are:**

**Group A:** Names beginning with **A through D**  
**Assignment 1A** is due on **Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>**  
**Assignment 2A** is due on **Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Group B:** Names beginning with **E through J**  
**Assignment 1B** is due on **Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**Assignment 2B** is due on **Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Group C:** Names beginning with **K through O**  
**Assignment 1C** is due on **Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**Assignment 2C** is due on **Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Group D:** Names beginning with **P through Z**  
**Assignment 1D** is due on **Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**Assignment 2D** is due on **Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup>**

Additional instructions regarding the questions and format for the paper assignments will be available on the iLearn website.

**LECTURES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

It is impossible to parse the readings to fit exactly the timing of lectures. The reading assignments indicate chapters or episodes drawn from all of the sources listed above. At a minimum, I will assume that everyone has read the selections from Strachan's edited volume and either the chapters in Lyons or the selection from Gilbert or Keegan *before the lectures*. The other assignments are for those who have purchased Ferguson or Strachan and the video. Note that some of the assignments cover two weeks of lecture, while others cover a single week. To distinguish the two Strachan books, readings from the *Oxford History of the First World War* are cited as Strachan [1]; those from *The First World War: An Illustrated History* are cited as Strachan [2].

► [4/3 - 4/5] **Origins of the War**

Strachan [1], Introduction; #1 [Williamson]

Lyons, Chapter 1-2

or Gilbert, Chapter 1

or Keegan, Chapter 1

Ferguson, Chapters 1-4

Strachan [2], Chapter 1

Video: Episode 1.1

► **[4/10 - 4/19] Realities, and Expectations, and the Crisis of 1914**

Lyons, Chapters 3-6  
 or Gilbert, Chapter 2-4  
 or Keegan, Chapters 2-4  
 Ferguson, Chapters 6-7  
 Strachan [2] Chapter 1-3  
 Video Episodes 1-3

► **[4/24 – 5/3] The Western and Eastern Fronts: 1914-1916**

Strachan, #2 [Farrar]; #3 [Showalter]; #4 French]; # 13 [Prior & Trevor-Wilson]; #20 [Morrow]  
 Lyons, Chapters 7-10  
 or Gilbert, Chapters 5-7; 9-14  
 or Keegan, Chapters 5-6; 8-9  
 Ferguson, Chapters 9-10  
 Strachan [2] Chapters 5-6  
 Video Episodes 5, 6

► **[5/8 - 5/10] The “Sideshows”**

Strachan, #5 [Crampton]; #6 [Trumpener]; #7 [Kinningray]; #8 [Halpern]; #9 [McKercher]  
 Lyons, Chapters 11-13; 18  
 or Gilbert, Chapters 8, 15-16  
 or Keegan, Chapter 7  
 Strachan [2] Chapter 3-4;  
 Video Episode 3-4

► **[5/15 - 5/17] At Home and In The Trenches**

Lyons, Chapter 14  
 Strachan, #10 [Strachan]; #11 [Braybon]; #12 [Turner]; #16 [Winter]  
 Lyons, Chapter 14  
 or Gilbert, Chapter 17  
 or Keegan, Chapter 9  
 Ferguson, Chapters 8; 11-13  
 Video Episodes 6.1-6.3

► **[5/22 - 5/31] 1917-1918: The Final Phase**

Strachan, #17 [Horne]; #18 [Trask]; #19 [Herwig]; #21 Travers  
 Lyons, Chapters 15-17; 19-20  
 or Gilbert, Chapters 19-27  
 or Keegan, Chapter 10  
 Strachan [2] Chapters 7 & 9  
 Video Episode 9, 10.1-10.2

► **[6/5- 6/7] Settling the Peace**

Strachan, #22 [Steiner]; #23 [Ecksteins]  
 Lyons, Chapters 21-22  
 or Gilbert, Chapters 28-29  
 Ferguson, Chapter 14  
 Video Episode 10.3-10.4