HST 290
Interpreting the First World War

History is an interpretation of the facts we can verify about the past. The subject of history is change. While reading history is usually enlightening and often fun, writing history is one of the highest of intellectual challenges. That is to say that if you can learn to write a decent history research paper, you have mastered one of the hardest things you will ever try to do. In the process you will learn to think.

Many people find this prospect terrifying, but conducting historical research and writing a research paper, like most other things, consists of a number of specific steps. If you try to master each of these steps you are very likely to succeed. I'm here to help, and the more often you come to see me about your project the more likely you are to do a good job.

The crucial commitment you need to make is to start this project today, and to work on it every single week according to the schedule provided. The paper you hand in must reflect 4 months of thinking. There is no way to cram that into two weeks, no matter how hard you work during those two weeks.

In order to give our reading and writing some focus we will investigate historical writing about the Great War, 1914-1918, also known as World War I. We will read a selection of articles and chapters (on library reserve) in order to understand the variety of explanations that historians have produced. You are invited to choose a particular aspect of the war on which to devise a research question and a 20-page research paper.

Course goals:
The goal of HST 290 is for you to practice the skills listed as “Learning Outcomes and Competencies” available at:
http://www.unew.edu/hst/ha-history.html
To earn an “A” in this course you should demonstrate that you have achieved the “Apprentice” level in the majority of these skills.

Books to Buy:
Kate Turabian A Manual for Writers of Term Papers . . . (7th ed.)
Save the Turabian for use throughout your college career

Assignments and Grading System:
1-page article thesis summary 50
3-page book review 100
Bibliography
First draft 100
Final draft 250
Discussion leader 100
Oral presentation 50
Class participation 100
Total 1000 points

Of the total 1000 points, it takes at least 900 to earn an A, at least 800 to earn a B, at least 700 to earn a C, and 600 to earn a D. I will add +/- to the upper and lower thirds (e.g., 866-899 = B +; 900-932 = A -).

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week One
Introduction
W Aug 18
Read the syllabus and skim the Brose book; review the “Learning Outcomes and Competencies” listed at: http://www.uncw.edu/hst/ba-history.html

Week Two
The War to end all Wars
M Aug 23 The War to end all Wars
W Aug. 25 Discussion
Read Brose Ch. 1-2; Turabian, Ch. 1 (pp. 3-11).

Choose an area of interest and begin reading a monograph on this topic. Record questions raised by the reading in a research journal.

Week Three
Origins and Causes of the War
M Aug. 30 Sources, Questions and Hypotheses
W Sept. 1 Discussion: “Origins” and “causes”: the same?

***Hand in a one-page paper in which you state the thesis of each of these excerpts and comment on how they are related to each other.

Week Four
The Shooting Starts
M Sept. 6 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
W Sept. 8 Discussion: “Old fashioned” military history?
Read: Brose, Ch. 3-4; Turabian, Ch. 2.
Week Five

Week Five Working in Randall Library
M Sept. 13 Location TBA
W Sept. 15 Location TBA
Read: Brose, Ch. 5-7; Turabian, Ch. 3.
*** Hand in a 3-page review of your monograph in which you identify its thesis
Work on your bibliography; place orders for ILL materials; read your second monograph.

This week you will meet with me. Bring to our meeting your main primary source and a copy of your research question.

Week Six

Week Six Being a Soldier
M Sept. 20 Organizing & Citing Information
W Sept. 22 Discussion: How do we talk about their experiences?
*** Hand in a bibliography for your project.
Follow the form in Turabian.
Finish your second monograph. Make a schedule for reading the rest of your assembled secondary materials; make a plan for using your primary sources.

Week Seven

Week Seven 1917
M Sept. 27 Periodization: our one big idea
*** Come to class prepared to give a 2-minute description of your main primary source and what you plan to do with it.
W Sept. 29 Discussion: How do we understand what happened in 1917?
Read: Brose, Ch. 8-9; Turabian, Ch. 4.

This is the week you should read more than any other week in your life (so far!). Dig in, concentrate and THINK. At the end of every book or article make sure your notes get into the right files. Make sure you note page numbers and full bibliographic info for each source you read.

Decide what story you have to tell. Who is this story about?

Week Eight

Week Eight Political economy of the war
M Oct. 4 FALL BREAK
Force yourself to interpret your evidence; pay attention to:
periodization; patterns; quantitative evidence; key people and
their biographies; track down crucial details: dates, names of
organizations; when laws were passed; etc.

W Oct. 6 Discussion: How did states mobilize industry and labor?
Read: G. Feldman, Army, Industry and Labor in Germany, 1914-
1918, Introduction, pp. 2-38.; J. Winter, The Great War in History,
Ch. 5, “Businessmen, Industrialists and Bankers,” and Ch. 6,
“Workers,” pp. 109-151; Turabian, Ch. 5-6.

*** Bring a list of your file titles to class.
By Friday, you should have read 75 % of your secondary material.
If your bibliography was marked “not approved” make the
necessary corrections and bring it to me for final approval this
week. I will not accept first drafts unless they are accompanied by
approved bibliographies. I’ll be available for consultation at office
hours and by appointment.

Start your first draft.

Week Nine

Women: the quintessential civilians
M Oct. 11 Writing
W Oct. 13 Discussion: How do we tell the story of women in
WWI?
Read: G. Braybon, ed, Braybon, “Winners or Losers: Women’s
Symbolic Role in the War Story,” pp. 86-112; and Gatrell, “The
Epic and the Domestic: Women and War in Russia,” pp. 198-215;
Turabian, Ch. 7 and 25.

Week Ten

How the war ends
M Oct. 18 Interpreting and Generalizing
*** Bring a copy of your introduction to class
W Oct. 20 Discussion: Why does Brose chose this periodization?
Read Brose, Ch. 10-11
Read, write, read, write, read what you wrote.

Week Eleven

Oct. 25-27 Writing Week: No Class
I’ll be available for consultation at office hours and by
appointment; stay in touch!
Turabian, Ch. 9-10 (Ch. 8 optional)

Week Twelve:
The war in pictures
M Nov. 1 FIRST DRAFTS DUE IN CLASS

*** ALL PAPERS MUST BE HANDED TO ME
PERSONALLY -- THEY MAY NOT BE HANDED TO A
SECRETARY, ANOTHER STUDENT OR PLACED IN MY MAILBOX. I WILL NOT READ OR GRADE PAPERS NOT HANDED TO ME IN PERSON during this class period except by prior, written arrangement.

W Nov 3 The war on film

Week Thirteen: Peacemaking
M Nov 8 Discussion: Interpreting the peace
Read Brose, Ch. 12; A. Mayer, Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918, Ch. 9 & Epilogue, pp. 329-393; Brose, Ch. 12

W Nov. 10 Second Guessing
There is probably more material you should read for your paper. Continue to gather and read. Worry about whether your interpretation is right. Re-read your paper with a red pen. Be very critical.

Week Fourteen War and Memory
M Nov. 15 Discussion: How has the war been remembered?
Read Brose, Ch. 13; M. Ecksteins, Rites of Spring, pp. 277-299; Brose, Ch. 12; Turabian, Ch. 11-12. Papers will be returned today in class. PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU MUST HAND THIS PAPER IN WITH YOUR FINAL DRAFT IN ORDER TO RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THIS COURSE.
Schedule a conference with me before Thanksgiving. Bring your draft to the meeting along with your responses to the questions I raised in my comments.

W Nov. 17 How to revise a paper.

Week Fifteen Rewriting
Read Turabian, Ch. 13
M Nov 22 No regular class this week. Schedule a conference with me if you have not already done so.
W Nov. 24 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week Sixteen Oral Reports
M Nov. 29
W Dec. 1

*** PAPERS DUE TO ME IN MY OFFICE at the beginning of your scheduled final exam period.
THEY MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE GRADED FIRST DRAFT. THEY MUST BE HANDED TO ME IN PERSON; I WILL NOT ACCEPT PAPERS ANY OTHER WAY EXCEPT BY PRIOR WRITTEN AGREEMENT.