Course Description

This course examines the history of metropolitan France and its colonial empire during the First World War. The infamous trenches of the Western Front are central to any understanding of the Great War in general and of France’s role in particular. Most of this front was located, after all, in France, and the war was both won and lost in this most decisive of theaters. Thus, we will pay close attention to the war in the metropole, both on the battlefield and on the home front. Nevertheless, a full accounting of the history of this industrialized and global conflict must extend far beyond the trenches of northeastern France. Waging total war required the mobilization of “La plus grande France” (or “Greater France,” as the combined entity of the nation and its overseas possessions was known). Accordingly, we will also examine both the ways the war affected France’s colonies—reaching into the lives and spaces of empire in profound ways—and the contributions of the colonies to the war effort—providing men and other resources to help France prosecute the war on the Western Front and beyond. The huge extent of the French colonial empire, then the world’s second largest and stretching from North and West Africa, to Madagascar, Indochina, the Pacific, and the Caribbean, helped ensure that the war was truly global.

Requirements and Grading

Grades will be based upon the satisfactory completion of all of the following requirements:

- Attendance and active participation in seminar discussions (40%)
- One short class presentation (10%)
- One 2-3 page paper proposal (10%)
- One 20-25 page final essay (40%)

Attendance and active participation in class discussions are mandatory. You must complete all of the week’s assigned reading by the beginning of class that week, and be prepared to discuss it with the group.

For the presentation, students will choose one week on which to present, at the beginning of that week’s class, 10 minutes worth of observations and questions about the reading. You must choose a week to present by no later than our second meeting.
Due no later than 30 November, the **paper proposal** will be 2-3 double-spaced pages in length, and will outline your approach to the final paper. I will review your proposal and provide comments within one week of submission.

The **final essay** will be due no later than 14 December, and will make use of the readings from the class to make judgments about both the history and the historiography of France and its empire during the Great War.

Please see below for further details about the writing assignments. For now, please take note of the policy of the Department of History on plagiarism: “Plagiarism is taking (which includes purchasing) the words and ideas of another and passing them off as one’s own work. If in a formal paper a student quotes someone, that student must use quotation marks and give a citation. Paraphrased or borrowed ideas are to be identified by proper citations. Plagiarism will result, at the minimum, in a failing grade for the assignment.” I would add that plagiarism violates the educational mission of the University, the ethical foundations of the scholarly endeavor, and the essential trust between instructors and students. Do not do it. If you do, and I catch you, I will enforce the appropriate penalty, including referral to University authorities for formal adjudication and sanction.

**Readings**

The required readings, which we will discuss in seminar each week, also appear in the schedule below. Most are available for purchase at the bookstore, while others are on reserve at the library. I have made the readings available, so it is your responsibility to obtain and complete them by the appropriate time.

Books available at the UAlbany bookstore:

- Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire since 1870* (978-0199735181)
- Leonard Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War* (978-0521666312)
- Ian Ousby, *The Road to Verdun: World War I's Most Momentous Battle and the Folly of Nationalism* (978-0385721738)
- Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (978-0143039044)
Schedule

8/31—Introduction and Background: Greater France from the Revolution to the 1920s
   Reading
   Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire since 1870*, Preface and pp. 1-180

9/7—Overview: Politics, Culture, Society, and War
   Reading
   Leonard Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War*

9/14—Verdun, Part One: Microcosm of the War
   Reading
   Alistair Horne, *The Price of Glory*

9/21—Verdun, Part Two: Microcosm of France
   Reading
   Ian Ousby, *The Road to Verdun: World War I’s Most Momentous Battle and the Folly of Nationalism*

9/28—The Generals’ War, Part One [**No class, Fall break**]
   Reading

10/5—The Generals’ War, Part Two
   Reading
   Robert A. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, pp. 250-516

10/12—In the Trenches
   Reading
   Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire*

10/19—Women and Men, Home Front and Battle Front
   Reading
   Martha Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War*

10/26—Women and the Home Front
   Reading
   Margaret Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front*
11/2—War, Empire, and Race, Part One: Soldiers and Workers

Reading

11/9—War, Empire, and Race, Part Two: Colonial Effects and Aftereffects

Reading
Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, pp. 202-293

11/16—War, Empire, and Race, Part Three: Images, Attitudes, Memories

Reading/Viewing
*Noirs et blancs en couleur* (film directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1976; English title, *Black and White in Color*)

11/23—[No class, eat turkey]
**Begin working on paper proposal for submission no later than 30 November.**

11/30—Explaining, Remembering, Representing
Reading

12/7—Grief and Trauma
Reading
Jean Yves Le Naour, The Living Unknown Soldier: A Story of Grief and the Great War

12/14—Final essay due

**Paper Proposal and Final Essay**
The paper proposal will be a 2-3 page plan for your longer, final essay. I will review the proposal and give it back to you within one week of submission, with comments and advice to help you as you develop your final essay. The exact theme of your paper is up to you. I am imposing no particular question for you to answer or themes for you to discuss. It is an opportunity for you to think about all of the reading and discussing we will have done throughout the term, and to distill this into an essay that highlights the main historical and historiographical issues as you see them. There will no doubt be many different approaches to this task and perspectives on the materials, but everyone will be working with essentially the same sources, i.e., the readings (and one film) for this class. Incorporating or citing other sources is not necessary, though it is certainly permissible if you find other materials you’ve encountered elsewhere germane to your discussion. View
the essay as an opportunity to show me what you can do, to display your best thinking and writing.

Please pay particular attention to the technical aspects of your writing—grammar and style. These are critical components of persuasive writing. Also pay close attention to these technical parameters: papers will be typed, with double-spaced, numbered, and stapled pages, one-inch margins, and 12-point Times New Roman font. At the top of the first page, put your name and a title for your proposal/essay.

Your final essay will cite all the sources you’ve consulted in footnotes, according to standard scholarly practice and format (Chicago Manual of Style; for quick reference, see: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)). Please also include a bibliography (in Chicago style) listing all works consulted.