English 98: The Great War: From War of the Worlds to Downton Abbey

“Between the opulent Edwardian years and the 1920s, the First World War opens like a gap in time. England after the war was a different place; the arts were different; history was different; sex, society, class were all different” –Samuel Hynes, A War Imagined

This year marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. Known as “The Great War,” it blasted apart Britain’s literary establishment, pouring forth writing from both combatants and non-combatants, men and women, in the form of plays, novels, poetry, and short stories. An understanding of historical context will help us appreciate the formal innovations of these writings as they attempt to grapple with the complexities of pain and violence; friendship and patriotism; gender and sexuality; memory and myth.

In addition to reading some of the century’s most monumental works, from Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway to Ford Madox Ford’s Parade’s End, we will trace the war in cultural memory, from War Horse to Downton Abbey. We will also engage with theorists from Sigmund Freud to Elaine Scarry, and consider a variety of research and critical approaches for treating historical literature and literary modernism. These readings are open to change or substitution.

Course Requirements

1. Regular attendance and participation. Students should also expect to attend three general meetings for the junior tutorials during the semester. Each student is also required to meet with the Departmental Writing Fellow (Alexis Becker, akbecker@fas) at least once during the term.
2. Weekly short response (1-2 paragraphs), due 24-hours before tutorial.
5. Junior Essay (15-20 pp.) due 12/9 (by 4pm, one copy to department, one copy to tutor).

Provisional Schedule

Introduction

Week 1
Siegfried Sassoon, “How to Die”
Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est,” “Anthem for Doomed Youth”
Isaac Rosenberg, “Break of Day in the Trenches”
Philip Larkin, “MCMXIV”
* Paul Fussell, from The Great War and Modern Memory

On the Eve of War: The Lights Go Out

Week 2
H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
* Stephen Greenblatt, “Towards a Poetics of Culture”

**Week 3**
George Bernard Shaw, *Heartbreak House*
Wyndham Lewis, from *BLAST*
* Fredric Jameson, from *Fables of Aggression*

**Week 4**
Ford Madox Ford, *Parade's End I (Some Do Not…)*
Rudyard Kipling, “For All We Have and Are”
* György Lukács, from *The Historical Novel*

**During the War: Waiting for Daylight**

**Week 5**
Ford Madox Ford, *Parade's End II (No More Parades)*
* Franco Moretti, from *The Atlas of the English Novel*

**Week 6**
Ford Madox Ford, *Parade's End III (A Man Could Stand Up)*
D. H. Lawrence, stories from *England, My England*
* Elaine Scarry, from *The Body in Pain*

**The World After the War**

**Week 7**
Ford Madox Ford, *Parade's End IV (The Last Post)*
Katherine Mansfield, stories from *The Garden Party*
* Sigmund Freud, “Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through”

**Week 8**
Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier*
* Steve Pinkerton, “Trauma and Cure in Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier***

**Week 9**
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
* Sarah Cole, from *At The Violet Hour*

**Week 10**
Ezra Pound, “Canto LXXX”
W. B. Yeats, “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death,” “The Second Coming”
* Michael Golston, from *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry*

**The Myth of the War**
Week 11
Michael Morpugo, *War Horse*

Week 12
Pat Barker, *Regeneration*
Julian Fellowes, episodes from *Downton Abbey*