

First Year Program: Plaisance College

FRPG 187L

Canada's Great War

St. Lawrence University—Fall 2009

Dr. Donna Alvah
Department of History
211 Piskor Hall
315-229-5867 or 5222

Dr. Robert Thacker
Canadian Studies Program
160C Whitman Hall
315-229-5970 or 5964

Office Hours:
Monday 10:30-11:30
Wednesday 1:45-2:45
Thursday 2:30-3:30
dalvah@stlawu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment
rthacker@stlawu.edu

Course Description:

Trenches and endless mud; tanks, machine guns, air attacks, chemical warfare; millions upon millions dead amid horrific conditions: World War I, the First World War, The Great War. It raged in Europe from 1914 to 1918 but, over here, the United States did not enter the fighting until April 1917. Canada, then still a colony of Great Britain, entered in 1914 and contributed significantly to the Allied war efforts—and for many reasons, its experience has proved central to its self definition as a nation and a culture. We will travel to Ottawa to examine the “Great War in Canadian Memory” by visiting museums and seeing the Great War iconography found there. The 1910s and 1920s were an incredibly complex time: tangled political alliances wrought by the horrors of modern combat, flawed visions for peace, the dissolution of empires and the creation of new nations, and social and cultural effects of war felt far beyond the battlefields. To better understand these matters, we will consider the perspectives of soldiers and civilians; men, women, and children; war proponents and pacifists; artists and commentators. Our materials for study and discussion will include historical scholarship, literature, film, and our on-site experience of the war's memory in Canada. “In Flanders Fields the Poppies Grow”

Plenary Sessions:

Like all First-Year Colleges, we will meet in "plenary" on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:10-11:40 a.m. We will meet in Piskor 10 for these plenaries. This time will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of information central to our investigations, will require each student's interested engagement and questioning spirit, and will be the site of formal oral presentations by each student.

Seminar Sessions:

These large sessions are complemented by one seminar meeting each week. These seminars are led by each student's academic advisor—either Dr. Alvah or Dr. Thacker—and will be occasions for reading, research, and writing instruction, discussions of the readings, and the first presentation of formal oral presentations to be given to the plenary.

Dr. Alvah, Tuesday, 8:30-10:00 am in Piskor 101

Dr. Thacker, Tuesday, 8:30-10:00 am in Memorial 102

Seminar is the site of more specific discussion of the readings, the analysis of student research and writing, and the first presentation of oral assignments.

Mentor:

Colin Loomis (csloom08@stlawu.edu)

AIM username: L11Colin9

Office hours: MW 7:00-9:30 pm—atrium of ODY Library.

Each college is assigned an upper-class student mentor. Ours is Colin Loomis, '12. Colin is trained to assist you with your writing, oral communications, and research assignments. He can help you brainstorm ideas for an assignment, rehearse a presentation, narrow your thesis for a paper, strengthen your organization in an essay, or work on stylistic and grammatical problems. His job is to help you learn how to do these things yourself. He is a tutor, not your personal editor. You are free to consult with Colin during his office hours and at his convenience. Successful students use the mentor.

Residential Life Staff:

Like all university classes, the First-Year Program is located in the classroom—but the FYP is unique in that its student members live together in the same residential college. Because of this, the members of the student life staff who live in each college (the Community Assistants) or nearby (the Residential Coordinator) are well aware of our course and of our community. For Plaisance College 2009-10, these people are:

Community Assistants:

Kathleen Berman (klberm08@stlawu.edu), 108 Rebert, 229-6161

Jackson Penfield-Cyr (jkpenf08@stlawu.edu), 208 Rebert, 229-6173

Residence Coordinator:

Holly Asimou (hasimou@stlawu.edu), Whitman 162, 229-5520

CLASS STRUCTURE:

Fundamental Requirement:

Unlike other courses you are taking this semester, “Canada’s Great War” is not intended as an introduction to a specific discipline or mode. Rather, it is a multidisciplinary exposure to liberal-arts learning at the university level. To this end, each student should arrive on time each day with the assigned reading done and with an interested attitude—each person should be willing and able to participate fully in the day's activities, however they are structured and presented. This course is not so much about knowing and regurgitating facts as it is about thinking, connecting, and understanding. These things only happen if each student does her or his part, every day.

Required Texts:

Findley, Timothy. *The Wars*. 1977. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005.

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*, 5th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.

Harrison, Charles Yale. *Generals Die in Bed*. 1930. Toronto: Annick Press, 2002.

Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time*. 1925. New York: Scribner’s, 2003.

Passchendaele. Rhombus Films, 2009.

In addition to the above texts, students will be responsible for all other readings made available during the semester (articles, excerpts from books, etc.). Some readings will be available on ANGEL and the T-Drive for you to print out and bring to class. Other items will be handed out in class.

ANGEL

Please sign up for the Plaisance College ANGEL web site (for Fall 2009). We can help you sign up, or you can do it on your own by going to <https://angel.stlawu.edu/angel/default.asp>, logging in with your SLU network user name and password, clicking on “Find a Course,” and entering the search term “Plaisance.” SLU’s Information Technology office provides basic information on enrolling in an ANGEL course at <http://infotech.stlawu.edu/node/129>.

Grade Distribution:

Formal Papers (Two)	20%
Poster Presentation for Community-Based Learning Festival	10%
Portfolio and Self-Assessment	10%
Oral Presentations (Two)	20%
Class Participation	20%
Midterm Exam (Date: Tuesday October 13)	20%

Note: All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Attendance, Punctuality, and Professionalism:

Your attendance and participation are required at each plenary and seminar meeting—a course such as this cannot work without the full participation of each of its members. You need to arrive for class on time, ready to go, and focused. All personal matters should have been attended to (eating, the bathroom), cell phones should be switched off.

And because this course is made of people who, in the course of things, see a good deal of each other, there is a tendency in the FYP to be a bit more casual about formalities. This is both a good and a bad thing: good because this familiarity serves to further our work, bad because sometimes people forget that this is a class. We will need to balance this together.

Even so, this is a class. Should you miss a class for reasons out of your control, you need to consult your seminar instructor about that absence—beforehand if at all possible—who will discuss your situation with you and decide whether the absence will be seen as excused or unexcused. Each unexcused absence will lower your final grade in the course by 5%. Students who arrive to class late will be marked as absent.

Field Trip:

An integral part of this course will be a mandatory college field trip to Ottawa on Saturday, September 12. There we will study the Great War iconography evident near and on Parliament Hill and, most particularly, tour the recently opened Canadian War Museum/ Musée Canadien de la Guerre—its slogan: “The spirit of a country, the courage of its people.”

To make the trip, you need to have a valid passport, an enhanced driver’s license, or an identification card from the U. S. government issued for border-crossing purposes. If you are not a U. S. citizen, you will also need to have proof of visa status. Again, your attendance is mandatory.

Community Based Learning Component and Poster Presentations:

Students in Plaisance College this semester are required to participate in a war-connected community-based learning component. Arrangements are being made to hold three evening meetings with local veterans—you will have a chance to talk to, question, and respond to these people about the ways their war experiences have affected their lives. Attendance at these evening meetings is mandatory, and will contribute to your class participation grade. Meetings will be scheduled in September, October, and November from 6 to 7:30 p.m.; we will provide specific dates and the location as soon as possible.

During the last week of class, our FYP will participate in the community-based learning festival with students from other courses. Students in our FYP will present posters that make connections between our course and the experiences of veterans with whom you've met during the semester. Students will work in pairs to create their posters.

Other Evening Activities:

On the evening of Thursday October 22, our FYP will watch and discuss the Canadian movie *Passchendaele* (2009). We also are trying to arrange a dinner and discussion with a guest speaker. We will provide more information (times, locations, etc.) soon.

Written and Oral Assignments:

A sheet describing expectations for each assignment will be distributed in plenary. In each case, both with writing assignments and oral presentations, your grade will be based on your performance throughout the process. Thus the first draft is just as important as the final paper; similarly, your initial practice run of your oral presentations is as important as the presentation to plenary.

Written Assignments:

Essays:

The formal assignments for this course—both oral and written--should be seen as something of a rising curve, with each connected to those that preceded it. Each assignment should be conceived as a step along the way to deeper and more informed analysis. In each essay, each student will submit both a draft and a revision of the paper. Here is what we envision.

1. You will write a 750-1000 word paper focused on Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*. In it, you will identify the author's purpose in writing the novel, concentrating on character, structure, details or other effects. What do think Harrison's larger purpose was in writing the book? Does he succeed? Which details there convince of his success?
2. Each student will research a central fact of the Great War and become an expert on its presence in the conflict. Take, as an example, trench warfare. Why did the conflict in Europe take this approach? Had it been used before? What were its effects? Each student will take up some element from the war and become expert on it—we will provide you with a list of potential topics. Your research paper will be in the range of 1500 words. It will involve staged assignments, including an annotated bibliography, outline, and initial draft. You also will give a formal presentation on your research project.

Advising Letters:

In addition to the formal papers, each student will be required to write three letters to her or his adviser. The first of these, due Tuesday September 1, will be a letter of introduction. The second letter, due Thursday October 8, will tell your adviser how your courses and other aspects of college life are going so far. This will build upon the letter of introduction you have already done; it will also connect to our discussions of the aims

and objectives of a liberal education. A third letter, due November 5 (before you meet with your adviser to discuss your academic planning and registration for the Spring 2010 semester), will articulate your intellectual goals and long-term plans during the next four years of study. This letter also will tell your adviser which courses you are considering taking in the spring, and why. We will record these letters as completed or not completed, rather than assign them a letter grade. However, they are required and do count toward the final grade.

Oral Assignments:

1. Revise your essay on the book *Generals Die in Bed* and make a five-minute presentation to the plenary. We will use the preceding seminar sessions as practice sessions for presentations, and students will formally critique each other's offering in seminar. Presentations in plenary classes on September 15, 17, and 22.
2. Present a distilled, five-to-seven minute version of your research findings. We will use the preceding seminar sessions as practice sessions, and students will formally critique each other's offering in seminar. Presentations in plenary classes November 10, 12, and 17.

Course Portfolio and Self-Assessment:

You are required to keep all versions of the writing done for this course—including draft versions and notes, and all assignments with the professors' comments—to be turned in at the end of the semester as a portfolio of your work during this semester. When you do so, you will include as your introduction a short essay reflecting on the development of your writing, oral presentation, discussion, research and reading skills. You should consider how the components of your portfolio are presented.

Late policy:

The relevant due dates are indicated on the syllabus, and you are expected to meet them without fail. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of .2 per day (beginning at the moment that the assignment is due). Here follows a list of excuses frequently offered but never compelling nor acceptable: computer problems of any sort; forgetfulness; oversleeping; loss of syllabus; travel conflict; other assignments (including tests) due for other courses; requirements of sports-related travel or participation.

Weekly Schedule:

Monday August 24: Introduction to the Course

Thursday August 27: Discuss readings on liberal education (Print out from ANGEL or T-Drive)

WEEK 1

Tues. Sept. 1: Meet in ODY Library room 140B 8:30 – 11:40 a.m.
1st advising letter due

Thurs. Sept. 3: Canada, 1914; Reading, Types of Writing, Talking About Texts
Readings: Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Fields*, prologue and chapter 1 (Print out from ANGEL or T-Drive); Chapters 1-3, Harrison, *Generals Die in Bed*

WEEK 2:

Tues. Sept. 8: Harrison, *Generals Die in Bed* (finish reading)

Thurs. Sept. 10: Discussion of *Generals Die in Bed*, continued
Draft essay on *Generals Die in Bed* due

Saturday September 12: Field trip to Ottawa

WEEK 3:

Tues. Sept. 15 and Thurs. Sept. 17: Student presentations

WEEK 4:

Tues. Sept. 22: Student presentations

Thurs. Sept. 24: FYP student programs (topics and locations to be announced)
Revised essay on *Generals Die in Bed* due

WEEK 5:

Tues. Sept. 29: Discussion about listening to and learning from veterans
Readings: Print out from ANGEL/T-Drive

Thurs. Oct. 1: No class

WEEK 6:

Tues. Oct. 6: A "Lost Generation" of "Hollow Men": Remembering
Reading: Hemingway, *In Our Time*

Tues. Oct. 8: A "Lost Generation" and discussion of *In Our Time*, continued
2nd advising letter due

WEEK 7:

Tues. Oct. 13: Midterm

Mid-Semester Break October 15-16

WEEK 8:**Tues. Oct. 20:** Work in ODY Library**Thurs. Oct. 22:** Discussion on watching and thinking about movies

Readings: Print out from ANGEL/T-Drive

Thursday evening: Watch and discuss movie *Passchendaele***WEEK 9:****Tues. Oct. 27:** “One Great Catastrophe”: Where is He Now?Reading: David MacFarlane, *The Danger Tree: Memory, War, and the Search for a Family's Past*, Chapter 5: “Fathers and Sons” (Print out from ANGEL/T-Drive)**Thurs. Oct. 29:** Discussion of excerpts from *The Danger Tree*, continued**WEEK 10:****Tues. Nov. 3:** Read and discuss Findley, *The Wars***Thurs. Nov. 5:** Discussion of *The Wars*, continued3rd advising letter due**WEEK 11:****Tues. Nov. 10:** Student presentations on research projects**Thurs. Nov. 12:** Student presentations on research projects**WEEK 12:****Tues. Nov. 17:** Student presentations on research projects**Thurs. Nov. 19:** No class; research essay draft due at your adviser's office by noon

Nov. 24/26: Thanksgiving Recess

WEEK 13:**Tuesday Dec. 1 and Thurs. Dec. 3:** Student conferences with advisers**WEEK 14:****Tues. Dec. 8 and Thurs. Dec. 10:** Community-Based Learning Festival (including our FYP students' poster presentations)**FINALS WEEK**

Revised research paper and portfolio (including self-assessment essay) due at your adviser's office by 11:30 a.m. Monday December 14.

First-Year Program Philosophy and Goals Statement 2009-2010

A residentially-based interdisciplinary first-year program is an ideal environment for beginning the four-year process of fostering the complex intellectual and social skills that are at the heart of a liberal education and the habits of considered values and engaged citizenship that such an education should produce and that are central to the university's aims and objectives. The First-Year Program (FYP) is comprised of a residentially-based, team-taught course (the FYP College) in the fall and a single instructor, research skills-oriented First-Year Seminar (FYS) in the spring.

This Philosophy and Goals statement serves as the guiding principles for the assessment of both fall FYP College and spring FYS syllabi to ensure that courses are meeting the agreed upon learning goals of the program. Not every course must attempt to address each and every goal below with the same depth. However, as part of the syllabus review process, each FYP and FYS course must identify which of the learning goals of the program their course will emphasize and how the syllabus and assignments address the rhetoric and communication skills goals of the program. FYS courses must demonstrate how the course speaks to the critical inquiry/research learning goals. Finally, although we do not mandate a minimum number of communication skills assignments, it is expected that students will be given multiple and varied opportunities to achieve the writing, speaking, and research learning goals, and that assignments are designed to both integrate the various modes of communication and offer students the opportunity to engage in drafts/rehearsals and revise their work with peer, mentor, and/or faculty feedback.

General philosophy and goals

With its commitment to collaborative, interdisciplinary teaching and its integrated sets of academic assignments, residential community-building and co-curricular activities, and the cultivation of student intentionality in academic planning over the whole first year, the FYP seeks to foster an intellectual community of literate, thoughtful, rhetorically sensitive and ethically responsible individuals who become increasingly able to:

- take a critical perspective on truth-claims of all sorts;
- confront issues of privilege (including and especially their own);
- develop interdisciplinary and creative intellectual agendas;
- place texts in their historical, cultural and political contexts;
- understand science and assess the ways scientific knowledge is used in society;
- recognize that they are in the world but not the center of it;
- participate in respectful debate about pressing social, environmental and scientific issues;
- recognize and reflect on their role as members of multiple geographical, political, cultural, and intellectual and identity communities;
- recognize the deeply social nature of knowledge production, including the processes that produce scientific knowledge;

- construct a course of study over four years that results from intentional decision-making about the process and goals of their education.

The FYP is built on six philosophical foundations that serve as the basis for our programmatic learning goals:

First, a liberal education requires an advanced degree of literacy and competency in a variety of communication skills. Reading (broadly understood) remains central to all forms of inquiry; however, today's world also demands complex forms of rhetorical sensitivity and an ability to integrate multiple communications skills. "Rhetorical sensitivity" means that students should be able to assess the requirements of a particular task and make intentional decisions about which mode or modes of communication and inquiry (e.g., writing, speaking, performance, etc.) to use in addressing them. Doing so requires that students develop specific writing, speaking, research and other competencies and literacies. Through both in-class and out-of-class assignments and activities, the FYP provides students with an intensive and extensive opportunity to develop these competencies and to explore how critical reading informs and enhances the practices of writing, speaking, listening, performing, viewing, and conducting research, and how all of these practices are ways of learning and knowing as well as ways of communicating. More information on these rhetoric and communication learning goals can be found in the FYP's ["Rhetoric and Communication in the FYP: A Guide to Pedagogy and Learning Goals"](#) document.

Second, a living-learning approach is essential if students are to become ethical and empathetic learners. Ours is a world marked by moral complexity, widespread inequality, diversity of all sorts, and the interaction (sometimes violent) of radically differing worldviews. The fall semester FYP College's residential component provides students with an opportunity to create communities that are governed not by unethical manipulation, coercion, and violence (both rhetorical and physical), but rather by an active sense of the multiple ways in which their lives are interconnected, a respect for difference, and a commitment to responsible representation of ideas and beliefs in conversation in all of its forms. This philosophy is reflected in FYP classroom pedagogy, which fosters learning experiences that are collaborative, cumulative, self-reflective, and dependent upon regular feedback from instructors, peers, mentors, and other tutors. In creating and maintaining this sort of environment, we view the FYP College as rooted in an approach to residential education that is humane, rigorous, and liberatory.

Third, an interdisciplinary, intercultural approach to learning benefits all students and faculty regardless of their chosen field of study. One defining political feature of our time is the increasing integration of the globe at greater and greater speeds, a process that has immense consequences for human communities and the natural environment. A defining intellectual feature of our time is the breaking down of traditional disciplinary boundaries in the face of challenges from new paradigms (e.g., postmodernism), new fields of study (e.g., gender studies) and the voices of groups (e.g., people of color) who have long been systematically suppressed, as well as the pressing need for collaboration between scientists and non-scientists on many of the central issues of the day. Engaging in interdisciplinary and intercultural learning is consistent with the traditional liberal arts

injunction to seek a broad, integrated education and to do so with an open mind. The FYP reflects this through its emphasis on cross-departmental team-teaching in the FYP College and interdisciplinary subject matter in the FYS and its determination to offer a curriculum that reflects emerging global realities. In so doing, the FYP hopes to ignite students' passions about topics of study and introduce them to the variety of approaches one can take to those topics.

Fourth, students must learn to assume responsibility for their own academic planning in consultation with a faculty advisor. As FYP faculty are also academic advisors for first-year students, they have a unique opportunity to help students become more reflective not only about intellectual work and living in a residential community, but also about the course of their education over the full four years. With the privilege of getting the kind of education a liberal-arts college provides comes the corresponding responsibility on the part of students to take their time here seriously. The FYP's approach to academic advising focuses on creating student agency in the construction of a flexible plan for the project(s) they will pursue both in and out of the classroom over their four years. As such, the faculty's role as advisors is to be a partner in the development of those plans and projects. In this way, advising is an extension of teaching in that advisors attempt to create the conditions for students to take charge of their own learning.

Fifth, a responsible approach to education recognizes the fundamentally social nature of knowledge production and promotes social awareness in all participants. A liberal education does not take place in a social vacuum, but is immersed in the same set of complex social and environmental structures and relationships that make up the wider social and natural worlds. Small-town liberal arts colleges, however, are too often viewed as "bubbles" that protect their students from these realities. The FYP is in a unique position to help transcend such parochial tendencies by making the perceptual, intellectual and experiential boundaries between the university and "the world," both social and natural, more permeable. To this end, the FYP intentionally awakens and cultivates in students an understanding that intellectual work matters because it allows us to participate in the ongoing pursuit of leaving the world a better place than we found it. This emphasis on social and environmental awareness helps lay the groundwork for future off-campus study experiences, informed social action and community service, more engaged local, national, and global citizenship, and a range of career paths.

Sixth, a pedagogy that seeks to advance the goals above must be critically reflective in all aspects of its practice. As a program committed to the development of critical pedagogies, the FYP offers faculty the space to reflect critically on their own positions in the creation of knowledge for their students. The ways in which knowledge is framed in syllabi, assignments and classroom pedagogy all imply particular assumptions about the location of the professor within those creations. By supporting faculty who choose to engage in dynamic, interdisciplinary work, the FYP fosters an ongoing critical engagement with these kind of assumptions about the relationships among the faculty, the students, and the subject matter of the course. By extension, the program provides an intellectual atmosphere within which students can begin to see themselves as active participants in the educational process while reflecting on the assumptions they bring with them to this process.

Ethical reflection and responsible representation

The work of the FYP asks students to reflect on the ethical dimensions of the choices they make, both in the classroom and out. Ethical concerns are most obvious in the case of doing academically honest work, where the choice of whether or not to uphold the standards of academic integrity needs to be understood as a matter of values and ethics, but students should also learn to develop an “ethic of responsible representation.”

Relying on discredited sources, cherry-picking data, falsifying experimental results, making ad hominem attacks, or just doing lazy or sloppy work are all examples of choices with a clear ethical dimension to them. Writers, speakers, and performers have an obligation to represent their ideas, the ideas of others, and the other people with whom they interact in ethically responsible ways. Attention to the ethical dimensions of communication should also inculcate in students a commitment to listening carefully and sympathetically to other speakers, reading authors as charitably as possible, and engaging in intellectual interactions, whether with written or visual texts or in conversation with others, with the assumption that their interlocutors share their own good faith commitment to the pursuit of knowledge.

Residential living

The same processes that inform the communication and interaction that students undertake in the classroom can and should inform their relationships outside of it.. A classroom pedagogy focused on rhetorical awareness can foster meaningful dialogue among all members of a residential community by helping students become conscious of their positions as speakers and listeners. Situating these communication skills in the context of ethically responsible representation reinforces the fact that communication always involves other people and thus the need to be reflective about the impact words and actions can have. We hope to foster in students the ability to engage in intercultural communication, where “intercultural” is understood to include the dimensions of diversity (e.g., demographic, political, religious) present in a residential learning community and a pluralistic society. Residential programming that fosters and helps to cultivate skills in rhetoric and communication, and makes clear the centrality of their ethical dimensions in a living/learning community, is crucial to making the connections between living and learning to which the fall FYP College aspires. The residential component of the FYP College thus begins the process by which students:

- understand both the rights and the responsibilities that come with being members of a community and why they will be held accountable for their actions in those communities
- learn to communicate and listen effectively and respectfully with diverse others (including but not limited to communication across lines of gender, race, and class) and to learn to see dialogue as a means to resolve conflict in productive ways
- understand in particular that due to the rhetorical complexities of sexual communication, consensuality in sexual interactions requires clarity in speaking and careful, respectful listening by all parties

- see the residence hall as a site of learning and their peers as partners in that learning process
- learn about campus and community resources so that they can become more engaged in the ongoing issues and conversations that are part of the campus community and beyond