“Let me recite what history teaches. History teaches.”

Gertrude Stein
The World Gone Mad
A First World War Military History
“There now seem to be two Great Wars – the one of literature and popular culture and the other of history”

Robert Cowley

We are going to be studying the second one!
Course Structure (1)

- Creating a tinderbox (Europe – Aug 1914)
- The lamps go out
  - How it started
  - The maneuver battles of 1914
- Big Battles (Europe – 1915/1916)
- Rule Britannia (The war on the seas)
- Learning to Fly (The First Air War)
Course Structure (2)

- The Forgotten Fringes (The Colonies and African Campaigns)
- Armies Collapse (Europe – 1917)
- End & Beginning (Europe – 1918)
Opening Thoughts

- Emphasis on strategy and doctrine
- Sidebars on weapons & tactics
  - *Trenches*
  - *Tactics*
  - *Artillery*
  - *Machine Guns*
  - *Flamethrowers*
  - *Poison Gas*
  - *Tanks*
  - *Generalship*
Opening Thoughts (2)

- Questions, Questions, Questions
- Maps (West Point, Martin Gilbert & Arthur Banks)
- Opinions vs. Fact
Casualties: Deaths, WIA’s, POW’s, MIA’s

“ONE DEATH IS A TRAGEDY, A MILLION DEATHS IS A STATISTIC”

STALIN
Introduction

- Seminal event of the 20th century
- Losses were horrendous
  - ≈ 75 million soldiers in uniform fought
  - ≈10 million military & ≈7 million civilians
  - Germany, France, England, Italy, & US lost more men per day in WW I than in WW II.
  - This does not include the permanently handicapped and mentally impaired (≈ 20 million more(?))
  - Also some 9 million POWs (of which ≈ ⅓ died in captivity)
  - 2 to possibly 6 million men simply disappeared?!
Many different opinions on some questions:

- Why did it start?
- Why couldn’t they stop it?
- Who was to blame?
- Why did the pre-war plans all fail?
- How important was the American contribution?
- Were the generals (generally) dumb?
- Was the German Army actually defeated?
- Could or should the war been continued after November 11, 1918?
- Should the Allies have invaded Germany?
When we’re done, you WILL NOT know the answers to any of these questions. You will only know my opinions which are no better than yours.
1. Western Front
2. Eastern Front
3. Caucasus Front
4. Salonika Front
5. Italian Front
6. Serbian Front
7. Persian Front
8. Palestinian Front
9. Suez Front
Creating a Tinderbox
THE CAUSE: FEAR!!!!

Für Gott, Vaterland und König.
(Pour Dieu, la Parente et l'Empereur.)
ISM’S, PANS, and other contributors

- Nationalism (Jingoism, Dynasticism)
- Imperialism (Colonialism) (84%)
  - To be a “Great Power”
- Pan-Slavism & Pan-Germanism
ISM’S, PANS, and other contributors (2)

- Arms Buildup
  - Russia’s military modernization plan
  - Naval arms race

- Perceived Population Pressures
  - Lebensraum in the East

- Militarism
  - Mobilization (28K trains, 2M men)
  - War Plans (Plan R, Plan S, Plan XVII, Schlieffen, Plan 19)
Two Assumptions

1. The war would be bloody and expensive but **SHORT**, therefore

2. Whoever first seized the initiative (took the offensive) would win
Therefore

- People were more scared of being **LATE** to the war than of getting into a war!!!
“War would overnight make us a state that dares to wage war. Whereas the whole of Europe has a crazy fear of war, the simple courage to have declared war would make us so respected that our vested rights would be secure for decades to come.”

Count Tanczos
Austrian Ambassador to Greece
Two Conflicting Views

- No war was coming
  - Left-wing politicians
  - International Businesses

- War was inevitable
  - Right-wing politicians
  - The Military
  - “Some damn fool thing in the Balkans.”
Europe 1914

- The Triple Alliance
  - Italy (1.2M) (£40M) – “Sacro-egoism”
  - Austria-Hungary (3M) (£25M)
  - Germany (4.5M) (£93M)

- Became the Central Powers
  - Italy (The Irredentists),
  + Turkey (0.4M – Nov. 1914),
Europe 1914 (2)

- The Triple Entente
  - Russia (6M) (£103M)
  - France (4M) (£72M)
  - England (0.9M) (£73M)
  - Became the Allied Powers

+ Italy in April 1915
Europe 1914 (3)

- **Others**
  - The United States (.2M) (£67M)
- **The Balkans**
  - Serbia (7/28) (.45M)(Allied)
  - Bulgaria (10/15)(.6M)(Central)
  - Romania (8/16)(.65M)(Allied)
  - Greece (Invaded by both sides)
    - Venizelos vs. Constantine
    - Allied (June 1917)
The Lamps Go Out

- Key Points!!
  - There was nothing inevitable about the sequence.
  - These were NOT dominos!
  - These were decisions made with full knowledge that they might lead to war.

Sir Edward Grey
The Spark
Some key players in getting it started
The March to War

Three Historical Views:

- Germany gets all the blame
  - Versailles

- Germany gets most of the blame
  - Tuchman, et al

- Everyone has some responsibility
  - Clark & MacMillan
The March to War

- 6/28: Assassination
  - Austria’s opportunity?
- 7/6: The “Blank Check”
- 7/23: The Ultimatum
- 7/28: Austria attacks Serbia
- 7/29: Russia begins mobilizing
  - Willie/Nicky telegrams
  - Russia’s Blank Check
The March to War (2)

- 7/30: **Germany & Russia fully mobilize**
  - Plans kick in
  - War is now inevitable
- 8/1: France mobilizes
  - France’s Blank Check
- 8/1: Germany declares war on Russia
- 8/3: **Germany** declares war on France and invades Belgium & Luxemburg
- 8/4: Britain declares war on Germany
The Myth

Young men go to war

Triumph of nationalism over left-wing idealism

The Reality
The Three Initial Fronts

- The Serbian Front
  - Austria → Serbia

- The Eastern Front
  - Austria → Russia
  - Russia → Austria
  - Russia → Germany

- The Western Front
  - Germany → France
  - France → Germany

Common Themes:
- Six major offensives all fail horribly
- Everyone suffers terrible casualties
Players on the Eastern Front
The Eastern Front

- Russia invades Prussia & gets hammered
  - Gumbinnen
  - Tannenberg (170K)
  - Masurian Lakes (125K)
- Austria & Russia invade each other
  - Galicia Campaign (Limanova-Lipanov)
  - Austrian get hammered (again) (450K)
  - Russians do better but with 250K losses
- Germans fail to take Warsaw (Lodz)
Austria’s Plan (and initial actions)

1. Austria invades Serbia (Plan S) & gets hammered
2. Austria’s Master Plan R (against Russia)
3. Austria’s “Swing” (the 2d) Army
Eastern Front

1. East Prussia (Tannenburg)
2. Galicia (Lemberg) (Limanova-Lipanov)
3. Silesia (Lodz)
East Prussia

Gumbinnen
Phase 2: Radio Messages & Speed of advance
East Prussia (2)

- Tannenberg: 26 – 30 August 1914
- Forces
  - German – 150,000
  - Russian – 230,000
- Losses
  - German – 13,000
  - Russian – 170,000 + 350 cannon
- Result – Complete destruction of Russian 2d Army
East Prussia (3)

- 1st Masurian Lakes: 7-14 September 1914
- Forces
  - German – 215,000
  - Russian – 250,000 (?)
- Losses
  - German – 10,000
  - Russian – 125,000
- Result: Complete German victory forcing Russia back out of East Prussia
1. Krasnik
2. Komarov
3. Gnila Lipa

Galicia (Lemberg) 8/23-9/11
Poland 11/11-23/6
Russia & Austria
Lodz & Rawa
Galicia

- August – September 1914
- Forces
  - Russia - 1.2M men
  - Austro-Hungary – 950,000 men
- Losses
  - Russia – 250,000
  - Austro-Hungary – 450,000
- Result – Complete Austrian disaster (100 miles retreat into the Carpathian Mountains)
The East at the end of 1914

Trench line of 1200 miles
Major German gains in the North
Major Russian gains in the South
Western Front Players
Plan XVII & The Schlieffen Plan
The Western Front

- Liege & Namur fall
- Plan XVII is a bloody failure
- The Battles of the Frontiers
  - 3.5 Million men involved
- The Germans drive to the South West
1: Alsace
2: Lorraine
3: Ardennes
4: Charleroi
5: Mons

8/7 – 9/6
The Pattern of Combat

- The French retreat;
- The French stop
- The Germans close up and dig
- The French attack and get slaughtered
- The French retreat
- Repeat Process

BEF Exceptions
- Mons
- LeCateau

The Turn to The Marne
German numbered army and its approximate position on August 4, 1914

Territory regained by the Allies during and after the First Battle of the Marne

Fortified city or town

Battles fought by the BEF
The Western Front (2)

- The Schlieffen Plan fails
  - The “Miracle on the Marne”
  - Retreat to the Aisne
  - Clausewitz could have warned them
    - Culminating Point
German Army on the March

Do these guys look culminated yet?
The Western Front (3)

- Falkenhayn replaces Moltke
- The "Race to the Sea"
  - Germans retreat to the "high ground"
  - Allies left with the "low ground"
- Stalemate (440 mile trench line)
- Easterners versus Westerners
THE ‘RACE TO THE SEA’

KEY
Belgian Army.
French movements.
British movements.
German movements.

NORTH ~ SEA

GERMAN ADVANCE FROM ANTWERP

The Channel Ports
[GERMAN OBJECTIVES]

ENGLISH CHANNEL

I, II & III Corps B.E.F. en route to Flanders.
Deaths (Aug to Nov) 1914

- British – 80K (BEF destroyed)
- French – 510K (≈ 1/3 total war loses)
- German – 280K (65K in the east)
- Russia – 500K (≈ 1/4 total war loses)
- Austria – 400K (≈ 1/3 total war loses)
- Never again would the loss rate be this high
1914 Summary

- 8 Million men have been involved in the fighting (Mobilization plans worked)
- Every major offensive (6) failed
- But, Germans hold 10% of France, all of Belgium and 11M civilians behind their lines.
- Germany holds 74% French coal & 81% of French iron production
1914 Summary (2)

- Russia has pushed Austria back but both are a whole LOT weaker.
- Trench lines now exist on both fronts.
- Some mobility still exists in the East.
- Stalemate on the Western Front.
- Something new would be needed to overcome the defense.
End of the Line, the North Sea
Questions?