

Canada's Great War and its Legacy

Lecturer: Dr. Tim Cook

Schedule of topics (each week's lecture will contain two sections, with time for questions and answers):

Week 1

Lecture 1a: Why War: in Europe and in Canada

The lecture will explore the causes of the Great War, why Canada was involved, and the shocking effects of this new industrial warfare in 1914.

Lecture 1b: Trial by Fire and Shock at Home

The trial-by-fire battle of the Canadians at Ypres in April 1915 is the focus of this lecture. The Canadians fought hard at Ypres, encountered lethal chlorine gas for the first time in the history of warfare, and paid a terrible price. The shock of the 6,000 casualties caused despair in Canada but also transformed the war into a crusade.

Week 2

Lecture 2a: Trench Warfare

The trenches of the Western Front became the strange home to the Canadian soldiers. This lecture will examine how soldiers fought, coped, and endured.

Lecture 2b: The War at Home

The war seeped into the lives of almost all Canadians. Despite enormous exertions, there was always the state demanding more.

Week 3

Lecture 3a: The Year of Battle, 1916

With new armies and artillery, 1916 was characterized by massive battles and costly campaigns. This lecture will look at the nature of the fighting, on land and in the air.

Lecture 3b: The Battle of Vimy Ridge, 1917

This lecture will examine the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917: the preparation and planning, how the Canadians captured the nearly impregnable position, and its enduring legacy.

Week 4

Lecture 4a: War Weariness

These lectures will examine the weariness of the soldiers at the front in deadly 1917 battles at Hill 70 and Passchendaele, and the growing strain on those at home.

Lecture 4b: Fighting to the Death, 1918

The Germans and then the Allies broke the stalemate on the Western Front in 1918. This was also a period of terrible carnage, especially within the Canadian Corps that spearheaded several crucial battles that contributed significantly to Allied victory.

Week 5

Lecture 5a: A Country Remade

After years of battle, and, late in the war, the lethal flu virus that killed millions worldwide, Canadian soldiers yearned to go home. But what kind of country did they return to in 1919?

Lecture 5b: Marking the Fallen

Over 66,000 Canadians died during the war and in its immediate aftermath. This lecture will look at the burial of the dead, the memorialization of the fallen, and Canadians' search for meaning.

Week 6

Lecture 6a: Veterans

The veterans' experience will be the focus of this lecture, with an exploration of state care for the wounded, the importance of veterans' organizations, and how veterans articulated their war experiences.

Lecture 6b: The Great War's Long Shadow

This final lecture will examine the contours of memory creation around the Great War and how subsequent generations have rediscovered it, often through popular media and family history. It will finish with an exploration of the Centennial period of 2014 to 2018, and why the war continues to resonate with Canadians.