

New People's University Observes Centennial of American Entry Into the First World War



The latest series in the People's University program at the Ohio County Public Library in Wheeling will explore the history of the First World War, with an emphasis on local events. Classes will start on April 4, nearly 100 years to the day since President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of Congress to request a declaration of war against Germany on April 2, 1917. The Senate approved on April 4, 1917, and the House of Representatives concurred on April 6, 1917.

The People's University: The First World War will meet on eight consecutive Tuesday evenings at 7 PM, from April 4 through May 23 in the library's auditorium.

The first class on Tuesday, April 4 at 7 PM will be "Prelude to War." Class description: In retrospect, the decision by the Great Powers to go to war in the summer of 1914 ranks as one of the greatest acts of folly in history. Why, at the moment of their maximum global dominance, did the Europeans choose to fall upon one another in a fratricidal war. Join us as we explore the interlocking system of alliances, the arms races on land and sea, the continuing imperial rivalry, and the increasingly frequent pace of international crises that lead to the fateful days in July of 1914 when Europe is plunged into what forever will be known as "The Great War."



Instructor Dr. Gary Kappel is Perry E. and Aleece C. Gresham Chair in Humanities and Professor of History at Bethany College. He earned his B.A. at Bethany College, and his M.A. and Ph.D. at West Virginia University.

The remainder of the schedule for People's University, The First World War:

Class 2: April 11 -- The Great War

Within a matter of just a few weeks in the summer of 1914, millions of Europeans were called to the colors in what at the time many thought would be a short, glorious war after which the boys would be home by Christmas. What they got, instead, was slaughter on an industrial scale made possible by all the new technologies of warfare including machine guns, quick-firing artillery, barbed wire, poison gas, airplanes, U-boats, and much more. Join us as we examine the failure of the opening offensives, followed by the horrors of trench warfare, as both sides tried desperately to break the stalemate. Meanwhile, on the home front, economic and social life became increasingly regimented as governments mobilized every segment of the country to carry the war to a final victory worthy of the enormous sacrifices.



Instructor: Dr. Gary Kappel

Class 3: April 18 -- The Yanks are Coming: U.S. Entry



After three years of unprecedented mobilization and combat, the members of the Triple Entente and Central Powers began showing real societal fractures. As a general war weariness set in across Europe, the powers on flanks -- France and Russia -- experienced mutiny and revolution, respectively, while the German Empire, increasingly plagued by food shortages and civil unrest, desperately searched for a way to win the war quickly. By unleashing unrestricted submarine warfare, Germany drew in the last of the non-belligerent Great Powers -- the United States -- and the arrival of fresh troops, backed by American industry, proved vital in turning the tide of war.

Instructor Dr. Jeff Rutherford is Assistant Professor of History at Wheeling Jesuit University. He earned his B.A. at SUNY at Binghamton, his M.A. at SUNY at Albany and his Ph.D. from University of Texas at Austin.



Class 4: April 25 -- West Virginia in the Great War



This class will focus on the boom to the coal industry, the temporary peace between the UMWA and the coal operators, the development of new industries for war production, especially in the Kanawha River Valley, and the role of soldiers from the state. In particular we will look at a sample of soldiers' experiences from the coalfields and the unique experience of African-Americans from McDowell County (in particular the town of Kimball).

Instructor Dr. Hal Gorby is Teaching Assistant Professor and Director of Undergraduate Advising at West Virginia University where he teaches West Virginia and Appalachian History and Immigration, Ethnic History, U.S. Working Class, and 20th Century U.S. He earned his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from West Virginia University.



Class 5: May 2 -- Wheeling in the Great War



During this class we will focus on how Wheelingites adjusted to the start of the Great War. Some topics will be how the various immigrant groups showed their patriotism, likewise the effects on the Catholic Diocese, those who opposed the war, and the rising anti-German backlash as the war wore on. We also will focus on the units Wheeling's young men joined, especially the 80th Division and the 314th Field Artillery.

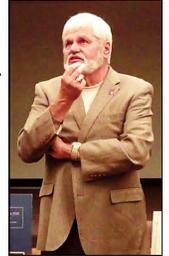
Instructor: Dr. Hal Gorby



Class 6: May 9 -- The Aviator: Louis Bennett, Jr.

Lt. Louis Bennett, Jr. (1894-1918) was West Virginia’s only World War I flying ace. He founded the West Virginia Flying Corps in Beech Bottom, and the West Virginia Aircraft Company in Warwood. Bennett died in battle over France on August 24, 1918, serving as a member of the British Royal Air Force. His mother honored her son with a stained glass window for London’s Westminster Abbey. She also commissioned a memorial bronze statue, “The Aviator,” that stands on the campus of Linsly School.

Instructor Dr. David T. Javersak grew up in Weirton and was educated at West Liberty State College, the University of Hawaii, and WVU. He is Dean Emeritus of Liberal Arts and Professor Emeritus of History at West Liberty University. **David H. McKinley**, a direct descendant of Louis Bennett, Jr., will assist Dr. Javersak in his research.



Class 7: May 16 -- Armistice & Aftermath



This class will focus mainly on the violence and revolutionary disturbances that came at the end of the war, including Russian, German, Hungarian, and Greeks vs. Turks, as well as the peace settlement, Versailles and other treaties, the creation of the League of Nations and its structure, and the reasons for its failure in the 1920s and 1930s. We will examine how the peace settlement created Revisionist Powers like Germany — a WWI foe

— as well as three of our WWI allies that become hostile: the Soviet Union, Japan, and Italy.

Instructor Dr. Joe Laker is Emeritus Professor of History at Wheeling Jesuit University and Chair of the West Virginia Independence Hall Foundation. He earned his B.A. at Marian College and his M.A. and Ph.D. at Indiana University.



Class 8: May 23 -- Wheeling Remembers the War



To conclude the study of WWI, we will examine how the war shaped Wheeling for years to come. Obviously the most affected were the families who lost sons abroad. We will also highlight the memorialization of the war in Wheeling and the surrounding region. This will include such organizations as the American Legion Post 1, immigrant veterans groups, and the famous Doughboy Statue.

Instructor: Dr. Hal Gorby

The People's University is a free program for adults who wish to continue their education in the liberal arts, featuring courses taught by experts in each subject that enable patrons to pursue their goal of lifelong learning in subjects such as history, philosophy, and literature. There are no grades and patrons are welcome to attend all or only some programs.

To register for The People's University The First World War, please call the library at 304-232-0244, send an email to lunchwithbooks@yahoo.com, or visit the Reference Desk. Remember, classes are free and open to the public. There are no grades, and registration is not a commitment. You are welcome to attend all or only some classes. Complimentary refreshments will be provided. For more information, visit www.ohiocountylibrary.org.

