

**Sophomore Inquiry 212C
America and the Great War
Introduction to American Studies**

UNIVERSITY STUDIES GOALS:

All of the courses in the 4 year University Studies sequence are committed to implementing activities which address the program's 4 primary goals. Here is how we intend to honor them in this course:

Communication:

In this course you will be expected to utilize various forms of communication: writing, some of which may be in the form of journals, free-writing, and critical responses; some in the form of group discussions, especially in the mentor section; and some in the form of a small group presentation to the class. Our primary focus will be on the written and spoken word, but we will want to pay special attention to graphical forms of communication as well.

Critical Inquiry:

You may want to think of this whole course as a practicum in critical inquiry. We will be exploring the Great War not simply as an historical occurrence, but even more as a political, social, and cultural watershed in American experience, the consequences of which still reverberate in our world today. But we also want to examine this war for the larger insights it provides into human nature and the ways in which *homo sapiens* organize their lives.

Diversity of Human Experience:

The Great War was also the first *world-wide* war, involving nations and peoples from a multitude of countries and a wide range of social circumstances. It brought these many different peoples into contact across differences of language and social class and ethnic traditions and world views. In the process, it crippled what remained of 19th century innocence and optimism, and broke open what many would call the Pandora's box of modernism, nihilism, and existential angst, and introduced an age of cynicism and irony.

Ethics and Social Responsibility:

War inherently entails issues of ethics and social responsibility. We will be raising at least some of those issues in relation to the Great War, to America's participation in that war, and especially in relation to the aftermath of the war. But we will also be exploring these issues in their larger, more general societal dimensions as well as those that seem much more immediate and specific and personal.