

Guidelines for Diplomatic Conference
The July Crisis, 1914
History 348, Dr. Werth

The idea of these conferences is to understand the predicaments and positions of various states and statesmen on the eve of the war (July, 1914) and in the war's aftermath (the Paris peace conference, 1919-1920). With this goal in mind, I am asking each of you to represent a particular country (or in some cases a non-state group, such as international socialists) at the conferences. In preparation for this task, you will write a "position paper" of four pages for each conference that outlines the central concerns, aspirations, and limitations of the country or group you represent. Because other students will be depending on you to represent your country effectively, it is essential that you prepare diligently and be ready to speak. This also means that absences for that day can be excused only in the most extreme cases.

In order to establish some continuity between 1914 and 1919, I will ask you to represent the same country/group at both points, although this may involve having you represent the second time a sub-unit of what you represented the first (e.g., someone might represent one half of Austria-Hungary the first time and then Austria, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, or Czechoslovakia, etc. the second time).

In composing your essay for this conference, imagine yourself as the situation appears at the end of July (after the Serbian response to the Austrian ultimatum), just as the most important decisions for war are being made. In some cases you will have to go into early August or later to explain your decision for war. Imagine that you are in discussion with other government officials making this important decision, or that you are writing honestly and openly to a dear friend or a spouse in an attempt to explain your decision for one course or another. The point is that in either case you will be frank and clear about the motivations for your decision. (If you are a socialist, imagine that you are seeking to decide with your comrades about whether and under what conditions to support a war that your country seems about to begin.) Recall that not all countries enter the war immediately, so some of you may be arguing against war at this point, though in your papers you should indicate why, in the end, your country *did* enter the war. You should probably briefly recount the recent events that condition the decision your state is about to make. Have you been forced to back down in recent diplomatic crises? Do you feel that other countries have been aggressive and have failed to acknowledge your legitimate interests? Is your country's status as a Great Power or its very existence at stake? You should consider also pressures on your government, from your population, from military leaders eager to grab the initiative (or pessimistic about your country's prospects), and from allied states that may be more interested in beginning a war than you are. You should note financial, military, and technological constraints where they are relevant. You should consider the broader aspirations of your state, its goals for the future. You should contemplate the dangers of war. Could the war unleash revolution or other undesirable forms of social upheaval? On the contrary, might war help to paper over important domestic conflicts by fabricating national unity? How real are these dangers for your country? What significance does your country's social and national composition have for the way it will act? In short, you should consider a range of factors in making your decision, and you should provide specific details in referring to them. The precise balance will depend on the country in question, and I am happy to discuss your country with you individually during office hours.

The fact that the paper is short suggests that you will need to analyze these factors, weigh them against one another, and boil them down to their essence. (I will **NOT** accept papers that go beyond four-and-a-half pages.) This in turn implies thought and contemplation, which in turn suggests that you need to give yourself time to complete his exercise properly. It will also be necessary to make your prose as economic as possible by eliminating any and all empty blather. It is possible to say a lot in four pages; it's also possible to say nothing at all. Make sure that you begin your paper with a clear statement of your country's position, and be sure that the arguments you make actually support the position that you advance.

The first step for you is to identify which country you wish to represent at the conference. Whatever you choose on the left side will require you to choose something from the same row on the right. The idea is to have some continuity between 1914 and 1919 for each participant (The case of Belgium and the US is the one exception—I can explain that to anyone who needs to know).

1914	1919-1920
Russia	Soviet Russia Poland Finland Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)
Great Britain	Great Britain
France	France
Germany	Germany Poland
Austria-Hungary	Austria Hungary Yugoslavia Poland Czechoslovakia Romania
Ottoman Empire	Turkey Arabs & new Arab states
Serbia	Yugoslavia
Italy	Italy
Romania	Romania
Bulgaria	Bulgaria
Belgium	United States
Japan	Japan
Greece	Greece
International Socialists	International Socialists

In writing your essay, you should rely both on the required readings for the course and *at least one other source*. What you read will depend on whom you are representing. Three books strike me as being especially useful in the case of most countries:

Keith Wilson, ed., *Decisions for War, 1914* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

Holger Herwig and Richard Hamilton, eds, *Decisions for War, 1914-1917* (Cambridge, 2004).

Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War, 1911-1923* (Oxford, 2014).

In one way or another these works will be available to you, whether through library reserve or posting to the internet or through the library website. If you are a fanatic for this project I can identify still other sources for you in consultation. I would avoid internet sources, since there is a colossal quantity of rubbish out there. Let us stick with reputable works that are based on real research and dispassionate consideration of the evidence.