The Western Front 100 Years Later:
Exploring the Landscape of WWI

2016 will mark the 100th anniversary of the year in which the Great War “turned.” As late as 1915 one could still speak of things like honor and glory without irony. This ceased to be the case in the war’s third calendar year, when the great, months-long battles of attrition began on the Western Front, most specifically the battles of Verdun in the French sector and the Somme in the English. On this trip, we will spend three days in London, six on the Western Front, and three in Paris. While some knowledge of French is not required, it is certainly encouraged.

More than functioning as a tour of military historical sites, this course will also have a strong literary/cultural component to it. These two aspects of the course will be bound together, both in our class readings during the semester and on the trip itself. In addition to readings in the history and literature of the war, with an emphasis on the year 1916, we will also explore the many revolutions in the arts that began in the second decade of the twentieth century and that parade under the banner of modernism. Conveniently, for the purposes of the trip, the modernist revolution had two principle seats in Western Europe: London and Paris.

It remains the case, however, that at the heart of both the course and the trip will be the battlefields, cemeteries, and monuments of the Front. If the weather cooperates, we will take several walking and cycling tours across this landscape.

*Duration of trip: 12-14 days (around May 10th-24th)
*Estimated cost of trip: $2500, not including airfare

Course Instructor: Ben Leubner is an Assistant Teaching Professor of English who specializes in American and European literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. He earned his Ph.D. in 2009 at Northeastern University, where he studied, among other things, the history and literature of World War One.