Mendes’s film, released in 2019, received ten nominations at the 92nd Academy Awards, including Best Film and Best Director and three wins for Best Cinematography, Best Visual Effects and Best Sound Mixing. This course will focus on the film as a launching pad for a discussion of the Great War itself, its major themes and tropes, and the literary and artistic past echoed throughout the film.

Students should watch the entire film before the first class on March 17, 2022. The format for the course will focus on key segments of the film for points for discussion. For instance, the film begins and ends with two pastoral moments that seem to repeat one another, and yet the experience of the film’s protagonist, Lance Corporal Schofield (George MacKay) reshapes the way we perceive that ending.

This course will emphasize major moments in the film such as the trench network on the Western front and No Man’s Land (opening scenes after the film’s pastoral beginning) in terms of not just the World War I’s significance as the first modern war but also in terms of how those images continue to resonate in the contemporary psyche. The phrases “in the trenches” and No Man’s Land have now lost their original meaning, but they are reminders of how unique and important the Great War was for Western Civilization, especially the war on the Western Front.

Schedule:


March 24: The house, the farm, and the airplane. Text: Erich Maria Remarque: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). Highly Recommended: American film version of *All Quiet on the Western Front.* (1930).

