

Mershon Center Speaker Series

**SUSAN GRAYZEL*****Did Women Have a Great War? Gender and the Global Conflict of 1914-1918***

Wednesday, March 29, 2017, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

The Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Avenue, Room 120
Columbus, Ohio 43201

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This event is co-sponsored by the Department of Theatre at The Ohio State University in conjunction with its production "Forbidden Zones: The Great War," which runs March 29-April 9. For more information, see go.osu.edu/forbiddenzones.

Susan R. Grayzel received her A.B. from Harvard University and M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author of *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), which won the British Council Prize from the North American Conference on British Studies in 2000, and *Women and the First World War* (Longman, 2002), a global history. 2012 saw the publication of two books, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge University Press) and *The First World War: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford St. Martins) for the Bedford Series in History and Culture.



Susan Grayzel
Professor of History
University of Mississippi

In addition, she is the co-editor with Philippa Levine of *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain* (Palgrave, 2009) and has published numerous shorter pieces in academic journals including *20th Century British History*, *Journal of Modern History*, and *Journal of Women's History*, as well as in several collections of essays. Her ongoing work on gender, women, and war will feature in several forthcoming volumes commemorating the upcoming 100th anniversary of the First World War.

She is currently engaged in two research projects; the first focuses on the cultural meanings of chemical warfare and the efforts to protect civilian bodies, especially via the invention of the gas mask, in Europe and its overseas colonies from the Hague Conventions (1899) through World War II, with an emphasis on imperial Britain and France. The second examines gender, citizenship, and the wartime state through an analysis of civil defence in twentieth-century Britain.

Grayzel teaches graduate courses on the cultural and social history of modern Europe and its colonies as well as on race, class, and gender, the body, and the world wars. In addition to teaching the introductory survey in European history, her undergraduate classes regularly include History 359 (Europe in the Age of Imperialism and World War); History 362 (The Second World War: The History of a Global Conflict); History 372 (Modern Britain); History 380 (Society and the Sexes in Modern Europe); and History 450 (Research Seminar in European History). She is currently developing new courses on the First World War as a Modern Global Conflict and on War in the Age of Cinema.

Abstract

The title of my talk pays homage to a classic and pioneering essay in women's history: Joan Kelly's 1977 "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" Kelly's intent was to see if -- by asking a question that placed women at the center of a world event -- we could challenge (as she put it) "accepted schemes of periodization." Following Kelly, the question "Did women have a Great War?" offers a starting point to consider whether or not we can separate the collective wartime and postwar experiences of women from those of their male counterparts. If so, how might a female-centered perspective enhance our understanding of the First World War? In order to address these questions, the talk will explore what the war meant, in at least a few ways, to women qua women in all its messy complexity by drawing upon a range of sources from visual and material evidence to government documents to women's own texts. It will then suggest what focusing on gendered experiences does to the history of the First World War and perhaps to modern war more generally.