Handout One: The Road to United States Involvement in World War I

It is the fall of 1914, and World War I is raging in Europe. Twenty-five years of competition for colonies has turned Europe into a jungle in which nations are struggling for survival. (Your textbook identifies various causes of this war). You, however, are an American, sitting peacefully across the Atlantic, watching the struggle. Your group represents a state in the United States Senate. In order for the United States to declare war in our simulation, two-thirds of the states must agree to enter the war on the same side. For each year beginning in 1914 for which you receive background information, your group must write one paragraph explaining:

(1) Should the United States enter World War I?
(2) Against whom should the United States declare war? (3) Why? Your answers should be logical and persuasive.

BACKGROUND EVENTS

June 1914—The Austrian Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated as he visits the Austrian colony of Bosnia in southeastern Europe. The assassin is a Bosnian Serb revolutionary who was trained and equipped by the small neighboring country of Serbia. Serbia and Bosnia are both populated with people of Slavic descent, and they would like to join together as a Slavic homeland.

July—August 1914—Austria demands an end to Serbian support of the Slavic revolution in Bosnia. Serbia refuses to obey after consulting with her ally, Russia. Austria declares war on Serbia. Russia declares war on Austria. Austria appeals for help to her ally, Germany. Germany declares war on Russia and Serbia. Russia asks her allies, England and France, for help. They respond by declaring war on Germany and Austria. The battle lines in Europe, therefore, look as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTRAL POWERS</th>
<th>ALLIED POWERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria-Hungary</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottoman Empire = Turkey</td>
<td>France</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serbia</td>
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The United States is shocked by the war. We would like to avoid it. We are committed to neutrality. The general rules governing neutral nations in times of war had been adopted at a conference in London in 1909. The only nation at war which had refused to sign the “Declaration of the Rights of Neutral Nations” was England. This “Declaration” stated that:

(1) Any neutral nation has the right to trade any product with any other neutral nation during a time of war.
(2) Any neutral nation has the right to trade any non-military products (like food) with any nation during a time of war.
(3) Any neutral nation has the right to arrange loans and financial agreements with any nation during a time of war.
(4) Before attacking any non-military ship, a naval warship must stop the ship and evacuate all passengers on board before sinking the ship.

President Wilson has repeatedly stated during the last few weeks that the United States will remain neutral during the war and that he expects all warring nations to respect “The Declaration of Rights of Neutral Nations.” On August 4th, he officially declares the U.S. to be a neutral country. He urges Americans to be “impartial in thought as well as in action ... neutral in fact as well as name.” Many Americans do not feel as neutral as Wilson would like. German-Americans (mostly living in the Midwest) and Irish-Americans (mostly living in Eastern cities) support the Central Powers. Many other Americans support England because of traditional ties of language, heritage and customs. Different factors might have influenced your opinions about the war depending on which state you are from. The following hints may help you make your decisions.
Remember: What would going to war mean for the American people? for soldiers? for the soldiers' families? When are wars worth fighting?

New York:
- New York City is the biggest port in the world
- Your state's economy depends on trade with Europe as well as manufacturing.
- New York City is the home of myriad groups of immigrants including a large contingent of Irish who are heavily involved in the politics of the city.

Massachusetts:
- Your state's economy depends on trade with Europe.
- Your state has always had strong ties with Great Britain.
- There is a very large Irish community in Boston which dominates the city's politics.
- One of your U.S. Senators is Republican Henry Cabot Lodge.

New Jersey:
- Your state's economy is based on manufacturing (including making war supplies) and trade.
- Woodrow Wilson used to be governor of New Jersey.
- Many immigrants live in New Jersey and work in New Jersey's factories.

North Carolina:
- Your state's economy is based on agriculture (tobacco) and textiles (used to make uniforms?), and some products are exported to Europe.
- A major U.S. shipping route is just off your coast.
- North Carolina Congressman Claude Kitchin said in 1915: "When people discover that the income tax will have to pay for the increase in the army and navy, preparedness will not be so popular with them as it is now."
- Your state is fairly conservative.

Illinois:
- Chicago has many different kinds of immigrants including Irish, Polish, Germans, Slavs, etc.
- Your state's economy depends on the railroad and the Great Lakes. Chicago is the great link between East and West. Important industries include meatpacking, manufacturing, etc.
- Jane Addams's Hull House is in Chicago. What did she think?

Wisconsin:
- Your state has a mostly agricultural economy.
- Your state is the most Progressive state in the country and is very concerned with continuing the reform movement.
- Your state is home to many German-Americans.
- One of your U.S. Senators is progressive Robert La Follette.

Nebraska:
- Your state's economy depends on agriculture, and because of a demand for exports, your farmers are prospering.
- Key politicians in your state include William Jennings Bryan and progressive Senator George Norris.

Texas:
- Your state's economy is based on cattle, cotton, and oil.
- Your state borders Mexico, and you fear that the unrest there might spread into Texas.

California:
- Your state has a mostly agricultural economy.
- Your state has a lot of trade with Asia and most Asian imports to the United States come through California.
- Your state borders Mexico.
- Your state has a lot of progressive reformers.
Handout Two: 1914

1. Germany invades France through neutral Belgium even though Germany and Belgium had signed a treaty guaranteeing German respect for Belgian neutrality. Allied propaganda claims that the Germans committed atrocities in Belgium. Only the miraculous Allied victory at the Marne River saves Paris.

2. England sets up a total blockade of Germany and major neutral European ports.
   a. England severely limits the types of goods allowed into neutral ports.
   b. England diverts any suspect contraband cargoes to England and frequently confiscates them, although usually paying for each shipload.
   c. England interferes with American mail to intercept military and economic information intended for Germany.
   d. England cuts the telegraph link between Germany and the U.S. so all war news must come through England. British newspapers begin to report on German atrocities in Belgium such as chopping off the hand of babies, attacking nuns & destroying universities. Most Americans are skeptical about these stories.*
   e. England forbids British citizens from doing business with Americans accused of violating England's rules on trade with Germany.
   f. When Americans protest this blockade, Sir Edward Grey points out that the British are just following the practice established by the U.S. in the Civil War.

3. England begins to increase dramatically its trade with the United States.

4. In April, prior to the war, Wilson's ended his policy of "watchful waiting" with Mexico and ordered U.S. marines to seize the Mexican city of Veracruz to prevent a German shipment of weapons from reaching Mexico's de facto president General Victoriano Huerta. Nineteen Americans and one hundred twenty-six Mexicans were killed in the fighting. Argentina, Brazil and Chile mediated a settlement of the conflict to prevent war. Huerta stepped down in July, and Venustiano Carranza (whom Wilson had supported) took over. In November, Wilson withdrew the American troops.

Should the United States enter the war?

If so, on whose side?

Why or why not?

* After the war Americans discover that most of these stories were false - the result of Allied wartime propaganda.
Handout Three: 1915  

State:  

Group members:  

1. Trench warfare develops on the Western Front. Millions die in “senseless” fighting. Even though the French do not advance more than three miles in the entire year, over a million and a half Frenchmen are killed.  

2. On February 4, 1915, Germany declares a war zone around the British Isles in which their submarines will operate freely. Germany places advertisements in American newspapers urging Americans not to travel on British ships. Wilson insists that under international law Americans have the right to travel on any ship. He warns Germany that it will be held accountable for any loss of American ships or lives.  
   a. On March 28, the British merchant ship Falaka is sunk in the Irish Sea. One American drowns.  
   b. On May 1, the American tanker Gulflight is sunk off the English coast. Two Americans lose their lives.  
   c. On May 7, the British luxury liner Lusitania (a ship similar to the Titanic) is sunk off the coast of Ireland. 1,198 people die including 128 Americans. Americans are outraged. Wilson demands an apology and reparations. The Germans point out that they warned Americans not to travel on the ship and that it was carrying arms and ammunition. They also claim, incorrectly, that it was armed. In June, Wilson repeats his demands in stronger terms. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan resigns in protest unwilling to risk war on the issue and joins the peace movement as a private citizen.  
   d. On August 19, the British passenger liner, Arabic, is sunk and two Americans are killed. Germany responds by paying an indemnity and  
   e. On September 1, it issues the Arabic Pledge promising to sink no more passenger ships without a warning and without providing for the rescue of the passengers.  

3. Great Britain extends its blockade and announces that it will seize vessels carrying goods to or from Germany wherever they are found. In addition, it severely restricts U.S. trade with neutral countries in Europe. England also continues to increase its purchase of many tons of supplies from the United States. Fearing a possible depression, Wilson lifts all loan restrictions and U.S. bankers arrange a $500 million loan to Britain and France.  

4. U.S. envoy Colonel House’s attempts to mediate the conflict are not seriously considered by the combatants.  

Should the United States enter the war?  

If so, on whose side?  

Why or why not?
Handout Four: 1916  

State:  

Group members:

1. Trench warfare continues on the Western Front. At the Battle of the Somme, which lasts five months, more Germans are killed than all the Americans killed in the Civil War. German zeppelins begin to bomb London.

2. Germany violates the Arabic pledge by sinking the French liner, Sussex, on March 24. Two Americans are injured. Germany again apologizes and in May pledges that its U-Boats will not sink any passenger or merchant ships (the Sussex pledge).

   a. U.S. export of munitions to England increased from $40 million to $1.3 billion
   b. U.S. trade with Britain and its allies has grown from $800 million to $3 billion.
   c. U.S. loans to Allied governments reached $2.3 billion compared to loans of $27 million to the Central Powers.
   d. Britain blacklists U.S. firms they suspect of dealing with the Central Powers

4. Britain drags their heels on U.S.'s offer of mediation (again offered by Wilson's trusted adviser Colonel House). Eventually House and Sir Edward Grey issue the House-Grey Memorandum which says that if England and France call for a peace conference and the Central Powers refuse, the U.S. would probably join the Allies. British troops put down the Irish Easter Rebellion (an attempt to win independence) so severely that most Americans are outraged.

5. Wilson wins a very close reelection campaign on a platform of social legislation, neutrality and war preparedness. His most famous campaign slogan is: "He kept us out of war!" Privately Wilson points out that "any little German lieutenant can put us into the war at any time by some calculated outrage."

6. Pancho Villa, a former bandit and rebel general, leads a rebellion against President Carranza in Mexico. His troops repeatedly attacked across the border into the U.S., and in March burned the town of Columbus, New Mexico, killing many Americans. Wilson's response is to order General John Pershing to lead an army of 6,000 men across the border to chase after Villa. Villa evades his pursuers and attacks across the border again. When Pershing invades Mexico again American troops end up clashing with Carranza's forces.

Should the United States enter the war?

If so, on whose side?

Why or why not?

"I've had enough!" Uncle Sam shouts as he jumps over the fence to chase Pancho Villa back into Mexico. The ruins of Columbus, N.M., smolder in the background after Villa's forces attacked between 8 and 9 March 1916. (Drawn by Clifford Berryman, 10 March 1916. NARA NWL-46-BERRYMAN-A076)
Handout Five: 1917

1. On January 22, Wilson made public his proposals for a fair peace to end World War I and to prevent future wars. President Wilson’s Peace Plan called for:
   a. peace without victory—no country should win or lose the war.
   b. the right of self-determination to be guaranteed to all nations (in other words, an end to colonies).
   c. a limit on the size of a nation’s army and navy.
   d. recognition by all countries of the rights of neutral nations and the freedom of the seas for ships of all countries.
   e. no secret alliances.
   f. A league of nations to insure peace in the future and democracy for all nations.

2. On January 31, Germany (gambling that it can win the war before the U.S. gets involved) announces it is resuming unrestricted submarine warfare, effective the next day. Any ship in the war zone will be sunk. On February 3rd, Wilson breaks off diplomatic relations with Germany. The same day an American ship is sunk.

3. On March 1, news of the Zimmermann Telegram breaks in the American press. This wireless telegram was a message from the German Foreign Secretary to the German minister in Mexico telling him to offer Mexico an alliance and financial aid in case of war between the U.S. and Germany. In return for her involvement, Mexico would be able to “recover” Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The telegram had been intercepted by British Secret Service agents.

4. On March 15, a popular and democratic revolution overthrows the Tsar of Russia. Russia seems close to surrendering to Germany. Germany would then be able to fight on only one front, combining its armies for a final overwhelming assault. The Allies are now all democracies.

5. On March 16, German submarines sink three American merchant ships in the North Atlantic. Six Americans are killed. Two more American ships are sunk later in the month. On April 2, 1917, Wilson addressed a special session of both houses of Congress and asked Congress for a declaration of war.

Should the United States enter the war?

If so, on whose side?

Why or why not?
On April 2, 1917, Wilson addressed a special session of both houses of Congress and asked Congress for a declaration of war.

1. List at least five points he should have made in his speech.

2. When Senator George Norris gave a speech opposing the war, what points should he have made?

3. Why did the United States enter the war?

4. Should the United States have entered the war?

5. Could Wilson have kept us out of the war? (HINT: Were there any precedents for this situation-a war in Europe with the United States trying to stay neutral but still trying to trade with the warring nations in Europe?)