

## History 357: World War II

Lecture (online synchronous): MWF, 12:05-12:55 pm

Discussion: W 3:30-4:20 pm, W 4:35-5:25 pm, R 8:50-9:40 am, and R 9:55-10:45 am.

Instructor: Dr. Ben Shannon

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Institution: University of Wisconsin-Madison

Office Hours: W, 1:30-3:30 pm (and by appt.)

Teaching Assistant: Alex Scheepens

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Office Hours: Th, 11:00am-1:00pm

### **Course Description**

World War II was not only the most important global event of the twentieth century, it also marked a crucial turning point in history. Never before had humankind experienced such a profound level of destruction, fueled by radical violence, industrial killing, and atomic weaponry. The upheaval created by this conflict displaced millions of people and transformed the map of the world. On ideological level, the war marked the end of fascism as a viable political system, the beginning of the Cold War struggle between Western Liberalism and Soviet-style Communism, and a shift toward decolonization in non-European lands. This course will explore these issues by examining World War II in the broadest context, tracing both its long-term causes and lasting effects. It will focus on important leaders like Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt, while also emphasizing the myriad experiences of individuals, soldiers, civilians, and victims of wartime violence. Through lecture, discussion, and engagement with primary source documents, students will emerge from this course with a better understanding of the political, social, and ideological aspects of the Second World War.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Identify key concepts and themes in the history of World War II
- Analyze historical primary sources and understand their significance
- Construct arguments by comparing two or more primary source documents
- Clearly communicate information, both verbally and through the written word

### **Student Workload**

This 4-credit, general education course meets for 4 hours per week (according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy, each 50-minute class counts as 1 hour). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course.

### **Grades**

Grades are based on the following scale:

100-93 = A  
92-88 = A/B  
87-83 = B  
82-77 = B/C  
76-70 = C  
69-60 = D  
59-0 = F

Final grades will be calculated accordingly:

Source Analysis (500 words) = 5%  
Comparative Analysis (1000 words) = 15%  
Final Paper (1500 words) = 30%  
Final Exam 25%  
Discussion 25%

## Writing Assignments

Students will complete three written assignments: a primary source analysis, a comparative source analysis, and a final paper. These assignments will be based on topics covered in lecture and discussion section and should be written without the aid of outside research. The purpose of the assignments is to familiarize students with the process of constructing historical arguments based on primary source documents. Papers must be submitted on their due date and will be penalized **one letter grade** for each day late. Deadline extensions will be considered for disability accommodation and cases of personal misfortune.

## Writing Standards and Assessment

Written assignments will be assessed according to the following criteria:

A = your paper has a cogently argued position with a clear thesis statement; your argument follows a logical progression; your paper demonstrates a superior understanding of the source and its historical significance; your paper is clearly written and free of basic errors in grammar and punctuation; your paper meets the appropriate word limit

A/B = your paper has a cogently argued position with a clear thesis statement; your argument follows a logical progression but may wander slightly; your paper demonstrates a firm understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is generally clear, despite a few minor mistakes in grammar and punctuation; your paper meets the appropriate word limit

B = your paper has reasonably strong arguments, but lacks a clear thesis statement; your argument follows a logical progression but wanders off topic; your paper demonstrates a moderate understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is unclear at times, with occasional mistakes in grammar and punctuation; your paper does not meet the appropriate word limit

B/C = your paper lacks a strong argument or clear thesis statement; your argument wanders on occasion; your paper demonstrates some understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is often unclear, due to mistakes in grammar and punctuation; your paper does not meet the appropriate word limit

C = your paper lacks a strong argument or clear thesis statement; your argument wanders; your paper demonstrates only the most basic understanding of the source and its historical significance; your writing is often unclear, due to major mistakes in grammar and punctuation

D = your argument has major flaws; your paper demonstrates a lack of understanding of the source and its historical significance; your paper is incomprehensible at times

F = Your paper is incomplete, entirely incomprehensible, or plagiarized

## **Exams**

The FINAL exam will be a take-home test, due Sunday, May 5 (05/05). This examination will consist of short answers and essays, with questions drawn directly from lecture.

## **Discussion**

Discussions will take place on Thursdays and will be based on the assigned readings for the week.

Discussion grades will be calculated according to the following standards:

**A** = you frequently volunteer to speak; you demonstrate a superior understanding of the assigned readings; you are able to clearly articulate the connection between the readings and the larger themes of the course; you make insightful contributions to discussion

**A/B** = you occasionally volunteer to speak; you demonstrate a solid understanding of readings; you are able to articulate the connection between the readings and the larger themes of the course; you occasionally make insightful contributions to discussion

**B** = you seldom volunteer to speak; you demonstrate some understanding of readings; you make basic connections between the readings and the larger themes of the course; you rarely make insightful contributions

**B/C or C** = you do not speak unless called upon; you demonstrate only the most superficial understanding of readings; you contribute very little to discussion

**D or F** = you do not speak; you demonstrate no understanding of the assigned readings; you make no contribution whatsoever to discussion

## **Required Readings**

History 357 Course Packet (available for download on CANVAS)

Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler* (available on Amazon.com)

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (available on Amazon.com)

## **Optional Readings**

For students that would like a comprehensive understanding of World War II, the following text is available on Amazon.com and on reserve at Helen C. White.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World At Arms: A Global History of World War II*

## **Expectations**

### **Attendance:**

Students are expected to arrive to class on time. Persistent tardiness (five times or more) will result in a reduction of one's discussion grade, up to 10%. Likewise, persistent unexcused absences (three or more) will also result in a reduction of the discussion grade, up to 50%. Students should make every effort to inform me of an expected absence prior to class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact me in order to obtain any missed assignments and contact a classmate to obtain lecture notes.

### **Classroom Etiquette:**

Laptops, tablets, cellphones, and all electronic equipment that is not related to disability accommodation must be shut off, silenced, or put away during class. Additionally, please refrain from bringing food to class. Drinks are fine!

### **Contacting Me:**

I encourage all students to visit me during office hours. If you are unable to meet during the times that I have set aside each week, please contact me about setting up an alternative meeting time (this can include video conference). I check my email at least once a day, however, the exact time varies according to my schedule. As a rule of thumb, you can expect a response from me within 24 hours. That said, I will not respond to email questions that can be answered by consulting the course syllabus.

## **Resources**

It is my hope that this class will help you become a better writer. For additional guidance in this regard, including individual consultation, please visit the UW Writing Center ([www.wisc.edu/writing](http://www.wisc.edu/writing)) or the History Lab (<https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/>)

Most academic historians cite sources according to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For a simple guide to Chicago-style citation, visit [www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html)

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas. For a description of the University of Wisconsin's policy on plagiarism and academic misconduct, see: <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/UWS14.pdf>

A statement from the McBurney Disability Resource Center ([www.mcburney.wisc.edu](http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu)):

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

## **Statements from the University of Wisconsin regarding COVID-19**

### **Students' Rules Rights, & Responsibilities**

During the global COVID pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community.

### **UW-Madison [Badger Pledge](#)**

### **UW-Madison Face Covering Guidelines**

While on campus all employees and students are required to wear [appropriate and properly fitting face coverings](#) while present in any campus building unless working alone in a laboratory or office space.

### **Face Coverings During In-person Instruction Statement (COVID-19)**

Individuals are expected to wear a face covering while inside any university building. Face coverings must be [worn correctly](#) (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. If any student is unable to wear a face-covering, an accommodation may be provided due to disability, medical condition, or other legitimate reason.

Students with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering should contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) or their Access Consultant if they are already affiliated. Students requesting an accommodation unrelated to disability or medical condition, should contact the Dean of Students Office.

Students who choose not to wear a face covering may not attend in-person classes, unless they are approved for an accommodation or exemption. All other students not wearing a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) and will not be allowed to return to the classroom until they agree to comply with the face covering policy. An instructor may cancel or suspend a course in-person meeting if a person is in the classroom without an approved face covering in position over their nose and mouth and refuses to immediately comply.

### **Quarantine or Isolation Due to COVID-19**

Students should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 [symptoms](#) and [get tested for the virus](#) if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Students should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

### **Regular and Substantive Interaction**

This course fulfills the University of Wisconsin's requirement of regular and substantive interaction between instructors and students by providing weekly opportunities for student engagement with the professor in lecture and office hours, and through weekly email correspondence from the professor, highlighting upcoming topics and assignments.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: History and the Memory of WWII

01/25: Introduction to History 357

01/27: WWII in Popular Memory

01/29: The Great War (WWI)

Readings: Adam Tooze, "We Remember World War II Wrong"

### Week 2: Interwar Crises

02/01: Paris Peace Conference

02/03: Democracy in Crisis

02/05: Communism and the Soviet Union

Readings: Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent* (ix-xvi, 1-40)

### Week 3: Authoritarian Alternatives

02/08: Fascism in Italy

02/10: Weimar Germany

02/12: The Nazi Revolution

Readings: Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler* (1-139)

### Week 4: Nazism

02/15: Germany Under Nazism

02/17: Appeasement and the Road to War

02/19: War with Poland

Readings: Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler* 140-309

### Week 5: War in Europe

02/22: German Victories, 1939-1941

02/24: Battle of Britain

02/26: Operation Barbarosa

Readings: Ernie Pyle, *Ernie Pyle in England*

### Week 6: Japan Enters the War

03/01: Japanese Imperialism

03/03: Pearl Harbor and US Involvement

03/05: Japanese Victories to Midway and Guadalcanal

Readings: Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire* (55-68, 88-114)

### Week 7: Total War

03/08: Home Fronts

03/10: Strategic Bombing

03/12: Race War in Europe and the Pacific

Readings: John Dower, *War Without Mercy* (3-14, 77-93)

Week 8: War of Annihilation

03/15: Anti-Semitism in Europe

03/17: The Murder of Eastern European Jews

03/19: Extermination Camps

Readings: Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*

Week 9: The Holocaust

03/22: The Jewish Experience in Occupied Territory

03/24: The Holocaust and Memory

03/26: Allied Victory in North Africa

Readings: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (1-100)

Week 10: Germany in Retreat

03/29: Stalingrad and Kursk

03/31: Allied Invasion of Italy

04/02: NO CLASS

Readings: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (101-187)

Week 11: Allied Victory in Europe

04/05: D-Day

04/07: The Battle of the Bulge

04/09: The Battle for Berlin

Readings: Vasily Grossman, *A Writer at War* (309-343)

Week 12: Allied Victory in the Pacific

04/12: Island Hopping, 1943-4

04/14: Iwo Jima and Okinawa

04/16: The Atomic Bomb

Readings: E.B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed*, (55-158)

Week 13: The Post-War Order

04/19: The Cost of War

04/21: WWII and the Origins of the Cold War

04/23: The United Nations

Readings: Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin* (34-117)

Week 14: Legacies of WWII

04/26: Nuremberg Trials, International Law, and Human Rights

04/28: End of European Empires

04/30: WWII and the Present

Readings: Jim Garamone, "Today's Americans Will Live up to the Legacy of WWII"

FINAL EXAM: Sunday, 05/02, 7:25pm - 9:25pm