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# HISTORY 600

## GENDER AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Mary Louise Roberts  
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Wednesday, 1:00-3:20, 5245 Humanities

### **Course Description**

This is a research seminar about the Second World War in Europe and the United States. In particular, we will focus on the ways in which gender figures in the experience of war. Some questions we will ask include: How do men and women experience the Second World War differently? Why are women not allowed on the front lines? Why are men who don't want to fight denigrated as traitors and cowards? What does it mean to be a male "warrior" or "hero"? How are violence and aggression connected to normative "manly" behaviors? What special vulnerabilities, such as rape, do women suffer in wartime? What special opportunities do they enjoy? In other words, how do gender identities shape war and are shaped by it?

### **Learning Goals**

The major purpose of this seminar is to offer students the opportunity to do a primary-source research paper on some gendered aspect of the Second World War. Students will be encouraged to explore local archives at the Wisconsin Historical Society as well as use Memorial Library. During the first half of the course, we will examine various aspects of the problem of gender and war. In the second half, we will work together on students' research papers, learning how to write a proposal, go to archives, formulate a research question, and write a paper.

### **Requirements:**

This is a 3 credit course. The credit standard is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instruction, student meeting times during my office hours, reading, writing, field trips, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

The major requirement of this course is a 20-25 page research paper on a topic related to gender and the Second World War. Short assignments throughout the semester will help break down the task for you: a 5-7 page paper based on the analysis of a document (15%), a 2-3 page proposal of your paper, a bibliography, an outline and a rough draft. The final paper is due the last day of class, April 26, and counts for 65% of your grade. Your attendance and participation in the seminar is crucial, and will count for 20% of your grade. This includes not only coming to class prepared and ready to discuss the readings, but also the care and attention you give to the work of the other students in the class.

## **Books to Purchase**

Christina Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II*  
Emily Yellin, *Our Mother's War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War Two*  
Free Press, 2005

## **Schedule of Classes:**

Week 1, January 25: INTRODUCTION: THE GENDERED RULES OF WAR

Zoia Medvedeva, *On the Road to Stalingrad*, 1-13. ©

Tatiana Dubinskaya, *In the Trenches*, Chapter 3 ©

Week 2, February 1 THE HOMEFRONT

Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, pp. 3-105

*Since you Went Away: World War Two Letters from American Women on the Homefront*, 146-152 ©

Rose, *Which People's War?* Chap. 4©

Week 3, February 8 MASCULINITY AND WAR

Christina Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II*, "Building the  
Body Politic," pp. 10-55

Rose, *Which People's War?* Chapter 5 ©

Aramais Hovsepien, "Your Son and Mine" ©

Week 4: February 15: SEX

LIBRARY TOUR

Rose, *Which People's War?* Chapter 3 ©

Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, Chapter 11

## **SHORT PAPER DUE, Friday, February 17. Document analysis.**

Week 5: February 22:

VET'S MUSEUM VISIT

Week 6: March 1: RACE

Jarvis, *The Male Body of War*, Chapter 4

Rose, *Which People's War?* Chapter 7 ©

Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, Chapter 7

Week 7: March 8 SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Excerpts, Svetlana Alexievich ©

Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, Chaps. 4-6

**March 15 -- SPRING VACATION**

Week 8 March 22

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

**2-3 PAGE PROPOSAL DUE AT MEETING (Description of topic, key primary sources, central questions)**

Week 9: March 29, WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER

Read sample senior paper and workshop a good historical question

**BIBLIOGRAPHY of PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES, Due at classtime**

Week 10: April 5

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

**OUTLINE of paper due at the meeting**

Week 11 April 12

EXCHANGE OF DRAFTS

Rough Drafts due at classtime

Week 12: April 19

DISCUSSION OF ROUGH DRAFTS

Week 13 April 26

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Week 14 May 3

FINAL PRESENTATIONS, Paper due at class time