
HISTORY 357, FALL 2023

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN MADISON
TUES-THURS, 1:00-2:15, 1651 HUMANITIES

Description:

The Second World War is arguably the most important global event in the twentieth century. It brought nearly the entire world into its vortex of violence, hatred, and industrial killing. It was a racial war begun by Germany and Japan in their quests for dominance. It was also a total war which demanded complete loyalty to the state and which consumed the natural, material and human resources of combatant nations. This course will explore these three themes of violence, racism and total war during the years 1939-1945. Lectures, screenings, and readings will emphasize the war as a turning point in global politics; the role of leaders such as Hitler, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin and Charles de Gaulle, the lived experience of war and occupation for soldiers, civilians, and prisoners, and the execution of Nazi genocide and Japanese atrocities. During weekly screenings of popular films, students will come to distinguish “popular” from “historical” memory of the Second World War, and gain critical distance on how the war has been remembered personally, officially, and in American culture. This is a 4 credit course which meets as a group for 4 hours per week and carries the expectation that you will spend an average of 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 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this class.

Learning Goals:

This is an in-person course. In this course, you will learn the main narrative of the Second World War in both the European and Pacific theaters. In your sections and in writing the two papers, you will become skilled at how to interpret primary historical documents, as well as how to place them within a proper historical context. The two exams will advance your ability to master the dates and details of history as well as synthesize broad themes such as fascism, totalitarianism, genocide, collaboration and resistance, survival, and the everyday life of a soldier.

Credits

This is a 4 credit course. The credit standard is met by an expectation of a total of 180 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, viewing movies and other student work as described in the syllabus. Prerequisite: Sophomore Standing

Requirements:

Active Participation in Lecture and Section Discussions (15%)

Two papers, **due October 6** and **November 21** (20% each), 1250-1500 words, to be turned in via Canvas

One midterm in-class exam **October 26:** Essay and Identifications (20%) Cumulative

One final exam: In-class objective **December 12**, second half of the class material ; Take-home essay due **December 15** (25%) 1000 -1250 words; cumulative since beginning of semester.

Grading

A	100%--94%
A-	< 94%-90%
B+	< 90%-87%
B	< 87%-84%
B-	< 84%-80%
C+	< 80%-77%
C	< 77%-74%
C-	< 74%-70%
D+	< 70%-67%
D	< 67%-64%
D-	< 64%-61%
F	< 61%-0%\

Grades will be converted to the UW MADISON Scheme at the end of the semester

A	100% to90%
AB	< 90% to85%
B	< 85% to80%
BC	< 80% to75%
C	< 75% to70%
D	< 70% to60%
F	< 60% to0%

Books to Purchase at the UW Bookstore:

Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*

Lauren Hillenbrand, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption*

Günter Koschorrek, *Blood Red Snow: The Memoirs of a German Soldier on the Eastern Front*

Yoshida Mitsuru, *Requiem for Battleship Yamato*

John Rabe, *The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe*

Andy Rooney, *My War*

Movies and Short Readings

Short readings are available at Canvas: [HISTORY357: The Second World War \(001\) FA23 \(wisc.edu\)](#)

All movies are **required**. Some are available on Canvas in the “Modules” section. Due to copyright issues, some cannot be screened for free via Canvas. In these cases, one copy has been put on reserve in the library. These films are also widely available on various streaming channels.

Contacts

Professor Roberts’ office hours on 2:30-4:30 Tuesdays or by appointment in 5101 Humanities

Email Professor Roberts at maryroberts@wisc.edu;

Michael Kaelin’s office hours are 3:30-5:30 Wednesdays, or by appointment, in 4272 Humanities

Email Michael Kaelin at mpkaelin@wisc.edu

Schedule of Classes

Week One: Introduction

9/7 Public Memory/Historical Memory

Watch:

Steven Spielberg, “Saving Private Ryan” (1998) [On reserve at Library; available at Amazon]

Week Two: Leading up to War

9/12 World War I and the Development of Fascism

9/14 War Clouds over Europe

Read:

Defying Hitler Introduction, 3-139

Week Three: Blitzkrieg

9/19 Poland, Finland, Scandinavia

9/21 France and the Netherlands

Watch: “Dunkirk” [On reserve at Library; available on Amazon, HBO Max]

Read:

Defying Hitler, 140-226, 269-296

Week Four: The War Widens

9/26 The Blitz in London

9/28 The Invasion of the USSR

Read:

Begin Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*, Preface, xv-xxii; pp. 1-113, Afterword, 191-223.

Week Five: The Third Reich

10/3 The New Order

10/5 War Clouds over Japan **FIRST PAPER DUE**

Watch:

“Defiance” (2008)[On reserve at Library; available on Amazon]

Read:

Vasily Grossman, “The German Capture of Orel” (Canvas)

Finish Browning

Week Six: China and Japan

10/10 The Rape of Nanking

10/12 The Entry of the United States into the War

Read:

John Rabe, *The Good Man of Nanking*, Foreword, vii-xvii; 3-124

Week Seven: An Ever-widening War

10/17 The Pacific War

10/19 Homefront USA

Read:

Lauren Hillenbrand, *Unbroken*, Preface, 3-175

Week Eight: Resistance

10/24 Resistance in Europe

10/26 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Watch:

“The Train” (1964) [Available on Canvas]

Week Nine: Turning Points

10/31 Midway and Guadalcanal

11/2 Stalingrad

Read:

Gunter Koschorrek, *Blood Red Snow*, Introduction, pp. 15-184

Week Ten: A New Allied Front

11/7 The War in the Mediterranean

11/9 The Campaign in Italy

Watch:

“Patton” (1970) [Available on canvas]

Read:

Excerpt Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men* on Canvas

Week Eleven: Moving towards Victory

11/14 D-Day and France

11/16 Death Camps

Watch:

“Day of all Days” Band of Brothers [Available on Canvas]

Read:

Andy Rooney, *My War*, 3-18, 51-226

Week Twelve:

11/21 no class: **SECOND PAPER DUE**

11/23 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Read: Hillenbrand, *Unbroken*, 179-318

Week Thirteen: Camps

11/28 POW Camps

11/30 Hiroshima and the Defeat of Japan

Read:

Vasily Grossmann, “Treblinka” on class website, learn@uw

Yoshida Mitsuru, *Requiem for Battleship Yamato*

Week Fourteen: The Last Days

12/4 The Bunker

12/6 Occupation

Watch:

“Downfall” (2004) [Available on Canvas]

Read:

Koschorrek, *Blood Red Snow*, 184-259

Week Fifteen: The Aftermath

12/12 Lecture: Who Won the Second World War? **Final Exam Objective Part**

Final exam essay due December 15, 5:00pm