
HISTORY 357
**THE SECOND WORLD WAR:
TOTAL WAR, THE HOLOCAUST, MEMORY**
SUMMER 2023

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



CLASS DETAILS

Instructor: Alex Scheepens
Email: scheepens@wisc.edu
Requisites: Sophomore standing

Dates: June 19-July 30, 2023
Format: online, asynchronous
Credits: 3

COURSE DESCRIPTION

World War II was not only the most important global event of the twentieth century, but 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. Between 1939 and 1945, the destruction caused by total war and genocide spread far beyond the well-known battlefields of Stalingrad and Normandy. It claimed the lives of non-combatants at their homes, on their streets, and in their fields, resulting in the death of tens of millions of men, women, and children. Brutal Nazi ideology drove the murder of six million European Jews and millions of other so-called “racial outsiders” and “political enemies” of the Third Reich. People who were fortunate enough to survive either found themselves stateless or homeless, or both, and endured the lasting impacts of war and genocide in every corner of their personal lives for decades.

It is precisely these still-visible wounds and legacies of war and genocide engraved in our post-1945 culture, society, and international order that remind us of the importance of understanding the events and consequences of the Second World War. This course offers a window into the battlefield, the home front, and the histories and memories of Europeans and Americans to this day. 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. One of our class's aims is to recognize and separate the portrayal of the war in popular culture from its actual historical representation. Through lectures, secondary readings, and engagement with primary source documents, you will emerge from this course with a better understanding of the political, social, and ideological aspects of the Second World War.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Studying the history of World War II helps us understand the foundations of our global society. More importantly, however, it teaches us to critically evaluate how the same events were experienced, narrated, and remembered differently across societies. This course will help you acquire a conceptual and practical framework for understanding the global impact of war and genocide. It will help you sharpen your ability to analyze and critically engage with sources and refine your abilities to communicate complex ideas. At the end of this course, you will be better prepared to:

- Identify and explain the major political, social, military, and ideological developments of World War II and provide an overall synthesis of its key events and lasting legacies.
 - Identify and explain the basic arguments put forward by the various authors of the assigned readings and be able to discuss and critique those arguments.
 - Analyze, assess, and interpret primary source documents by placing these in their historical context and understanding their historical significance.
 - Effectively convey complex historical ideas to a broader audience in a clear, concise, and engaging manner through the creation of a podcast episode.
 - Draw connections between historical themes and contemporary issues of war and genocide and demonstrate an understanding of the relevance of history to the present.
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COURSE MATERIAL

All course readings for this class, unless otherwise indicated, will be freely available and posted on Canvas in PDF form. If you encounter any difficulties or problems accessing the readings, please contact me as soon as possible.

To access the course materials (syllabus, lectures, readings, and assignments), please visit the course website on Canvas: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/351873>

STUDENT WORKLOAD

This 3-credit course requires a minimum of 135 hours of student engagement (at least 45 hours per credit), which equates to 22.5 hours of work per week. This includes various learning activities such as reading, writing, and other course-related work outlined in the syllabus. Because this is an online asynchronous course, there are no set student/instructor meeting times; though the requirement that students watch lecture recordings each week is included in this total.

COMMUNICATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Email is the best way to reach me. You can expect to receive a response within twenty-four hours. Some matters are too complex to address via email; in those cases, I will suggest we meet over the phone or Zoom. If the question is relevant to other students as well, feel free to post it in the “General Questions” discussion thread on Canvas. Alternatively, I might propose presenting the matter during Thursday’s Zoom session. For individual meetings, please email me in advance to schedule a time to meet as well as the topic you would like to discuss. Note that since email will also be the way I get in touch with you, make sure to check your inbox daily.

DISABILITIES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Disability guidelines for course accommodations may be found at the [UW McBurney Disability Resource Center](#). Contact me immediately if you would like to talk further about accommodations.

FORMATTING AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Papers should be turned in on time to avoid a grade penalty. Late work will be penalized by one letter grade per day. All assignments should be submitted by the deadline as Word documents on the Canvas course site. Unless otherwise agreed, email submissions will not be accepted. All assignments should stick to the word or page limit to avoid a grade penalty and use Times New Roman 12-point font and double spacing. Historians use footnote citations in the Chicago Manual of Style, an explanation of which can be found [online](#).

NOTE: All meeting and deadline times are Central (Madison, WI time).

WRITING RESOURCES

For additional writing guidance, I highly recommend taking a look at the following resource centers:

- The **UW Writing Center** will open over the summer and allow you to work with a consultant to improve your written work. More information can be found on [their website](#).
 - The **History Lab** has numerous [writing guides](#) on their website that will help you with the course’s various written assignments.
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ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism—that is, the use of another’s words or ideas or copying the work of others without proper acknowledgement—will not be tolerated. This includes the use of AI tools, such as **ChatGPT**. Engaging in behaviors that violate UW policy and academic honesty may lead to severe consequences, including failing the course. That said, because we will be working with multiple sources, both primary and secondary, we are also susceptible to committing unintentional acts of plagiarism. This is easily avoided by the proper use of citations. If you are concerned that you might be unintentionally plagiarizing or are unclear on how to avoid it, please reach out to me in order to discuss citations and how to use sources appropriately. For further information about what constitutes plagiarism, please visit the UW Academic Misconduct [website](#).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Weekly Discussion Posts and Peer Responses (100-150 words): 30%**
 - Every Wednesday and Friday, you will read a chapter/article/excerpt and answer one or more questions on Canvas (questions can be viewed in the syllabus and discussion threads). Plan to read the questions before you read the text. You are to provide thoughtfully constructed answers, backed up with clear and specific examples from the reading in question. In addition, you will respond to the discussion post of at least one of your peers for **each** reading. When responding to your classmates, it is important to maintain a respectful and courteous tone, even if you do not agree with their answer or interpretation. You can either argue in favor of your own perspective while disagreeing with your peer; build upon their points to support them; provide more evidence; present follow-up questions; and/or draw connections to the course lectures. You will receive full credit, if your post offers a well-considered and compelling answer or response; directly engages with the course reading and material; is written clearly, with correct usage, and with no major grammatical or other errors; and, when appropriate, engages different opinions in a manner that is respectful and conducive to promoting a productive learning environment. Initial posts (100-150 words) will be due on Wednesday and Friday at 11:59 PM; peer responses (50-100 words) on the following Sunday at 11:59 PM.
- **Weekly Reflections and News Content Curation (one page): 21%**
 - You will be asked to look for contemporary echoes of our World War II course themes by regularly reading a good-quality newspaper, website, or blog, such as the New York Times, BBC, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, or the Economist. Other news and media outlets are fine, but make sure they are reputable (feel free to ask me in advance). For **each week**, you will be required to submit two articles that touch on our course themes, accompanied by a one-page, double-spaced, personal reflection on: 1) how these two news articles are related to our course, and 2) how the topics we have encountered during our weekly theme are relevant to our present-day moment. Your weekly reflections will be due the Sunday of the following week—meaning that a Week 2 reflection will be due on Sunday, July 2, at 11:59 PM.
- **Primary Source Analysis (FOUR papers of 500 words each): 24%**
 - You will choose four (out of six) of the weekly primary source documents to analyze. For weeks with more than one document, you will analyze all of the materials together. When examining the document(s), think about these major questions: What kind of source are you reading? Who wrote it? What was the author's intended goal? What can the document tell us about its creator and the time in which it was written? What is the historical context and significance? Should we question this document? Why or why not? How can we use this document to think about history? These assignments are due the Friday of the following week—meaning that if you choose to write on the Week 4 sources, your work will be due on the Friday of Week 5 at 11:59 PM. Note that for Week 6, your analysis will be due that same Friday.
- **Final Project – Podcast Episode: 25%**
 - For your final project you will be asked to create a podcast in which you will introduce a World War II artifact that you have curated and researched in advance. I will provide more information about this separately during the first week of class. Your final project will be due on Sunday, July 30 at 11:59 PM.

COURSE GRADING SCALE

A = 100-93; **AB** = 92-88; **B** = 87-83; **BC** = 82-77; **C** = 76-70; **D** = 69-60; **F** = 59-0.

SUMMARY OF CLASS FORMAT

Because the condensed schedule of this six-week course might at times seem overwhelming, I suggest referring to the following chart to get a better grasp of your week and to plan ahead in terms of your reading and writing assignments:

Monday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
- Lecture - Primary source reading(s)	- Chapter/article reading - Discussion post (due at 11:59 PM)	- Open discussion [optional]	- Chapter/article reading - Discussion post (due at 11:59 PM) ----- - <u>Four</u> Primary Source Analysis papers (due at 11:59 AM)	- <u>Two</u> peer responses (due at 11:59 PM) - Weekly reflection + news content curation (due at 11:59 PM) ----- - Final Project (due July 30 at 11:59 PM)

NOTE: Each weekly theme (including all its materials) will be available to you on Canvas every Monday at 8 AM.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY READINGS

Week 1: The War in Historical and Global Context

- Monday (6/19): Introduction
 - WATCH: Introductory and Week 1 Lectures
 - DO: [Introduce yourself](#) on Canvas! (due at 11:59 PM)
 - PRIMARY SOURCE READING: The Treaty of Versailles and the Program of the NSDAP in Roderick Stackelberg and Sally Anne Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
 - Wednesday (6/21): Interwar Crises
 - READ: Chapter 1 (“The Deserted Temple”) in Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: Why did liberal democracy fail in most European countries during the interwar period? What were some of its problems and why were Europeans drawn toward other-more extreme-ideologies in the vacuum that was created? **OR**
 - Q: By the 1930s, the ideological struggle was primarily within and among the European Right. How did the Old Right differ from the New Right? What is a totalitarian state? How was this manifested in Nazi Germany during the 1930s?
 - Thursday (6/22):
 - ATTEND: Open discussion over Zoom between 12:00-1:00 PM [optional]. This is an opportunity to meet your fellow students and me and ask both broader and more specific questions on the course material, readings, assignments, etc. Since this is an informal meeting, feel free to raise any topic for discussion.
 - Friday (6/23): The Road to War
 - READ: Chapter 1 (“From One War to Another”) in Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: What is, in your opinion, the relationship between the First World War and the Second World War? Were there certain events and developments that contributed to the political, military, economic, and social destabilization of the European continent and, eventually, to another major war merely two decades after the first one ended? And to be more specific, what do you think this meant for Germany?
 - Sunday (6/25):
 - DO: Peer responses on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM).
 - DO: Weekly Reflection and News Content Curation assignment (due at 11:59 PM).
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Week 2: The European Battlefield

- Monday (6/26): The German *Blitzkrieg*
 - WATCH: Week 2 Lecture
 - PRIMARY SOURCE READING: Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau (Document 38) and Karl Fuchs (Document 39) in Robert G. Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010).
 - Wednesday (6/28): War of Annihilation (*Vernichtungskrieg*)
 - READ: Chapter 6 (“War of Annihilation: Into the Soviet Union”) in Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: Why was Germany's campaign on the Eastern Front viewed by Hitler and other high-ranked Nazi figures (as well as by the *Wehrmacht* and the *SS-Einsatzgruppen*) as a “war of annihilation” (*Vernichtungskrieg*)? Think about Nazi racial theories, the concept of *Lebensraum* (“living space”), and Nazi German attitudes and policies toward local Eastern European populations. In your answer, provide at least three concrete examples of how this war of annihilation was manifested on the Eastern Front.
 - Thursday (6/29):
 - ATTEND: Open discussion between 12:00-1:00 PM [optional].
 - Friday (6/30): Nazi Occupation Regimes
 - READ: Chapter 4 (“Living with the Germans”) in Peter Fritzsche, *An Iron Wind: Europe Under Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: Thinking about the differences between German actions in Paris and Warsaw, what did Nazi forces do in each of these places? Was there a certain tone to their overlordship of one place that was not found in the other? Try to offer an understanding of why German actions were—or were not—different from one conquered nation to the next.
 - Sunday (7/2):
 - DO: Peer responses on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM).
 - DO: Weekly Reflection and News Content Curation assignment (due at 11:59 PM).
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Week 3: Race and War in the Pacific

- Monday (7/3): The War Widens
 - WATCH: Week 3 Lecture
 - PRIMARY SOURCE READING: Excerpts from Eugene B. Sledge's *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*.

- Wednesday (7/5): Japanese Imperialism
 - READ: Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 55-68, 88-114.
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: When comparing the political, ideological, and cultural developments in Japan to those of Nazi Germany during the 1930s, what are some similarities—as well as differences—that you recognize between the two?
- Thursday (7/6):
 - ATTEND: Open discussion between 12:00-1:00 PM [optional].
- Friday (7/7): The Boiling Pacific
 - READ: Part I (“Enemies”) in John W. Dower. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: How were the Japanese depicted by the Western Allies, and vice versa—how were Americans and Europeans constructed in the imagination of the Japanese? What were the consequences of these depictions, representations, and expressions of "Self" and "Other" to the battlefield itself and to the military confrontations between American and Japanese soldiers? How was this different from American attitudes vis-à-vis the Germans in Europe?
- Sunday (7/9):
 - DO: Peer responses on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM).
 - DO: Weekly Reflection and News Content Curation assignment (due at 11:59 PM).

Week 4: Total War on the Home Front

- Monday (7/10): The Third Reich
 - WATCH: Week 4 Lecture
 - PRIMARY SOURCE READING: Melita Maschmann (Document 9) and Inge Deutschkron (Document 32) in Robert G. Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2010).
- Wednesday (7/12): Great Britain and the Blitz
 - READ: “Introduction” in Peter Fritzsche, *An Iron Wind: Europe Under Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 2016) and excerpts from Ernie Pyle’s *Ernie Pyle in England*.
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: How did World War II, according to Fritzsche's introductory chapter, differ from the World War I in terms of the civilian experience on the home front? Think about violence and hardships—but also about morality and ethics. Taking Great Britain as an example, how do you think this is manifested in Great Britain during the German Blitz? What do we learn, for example, about the British mood and spirit as well as the attitudes and responses of the British to the war and the German bombings?

- Thursday (7/13):
 - ATTEND: Open discussion between 12:00-1:00 PM [optional].
- Friday (7/14): German Women on the (Home) Front
 - READ: “Introduction” and Chapter 1 (“The Lost Generation of German Women”) in Wendy Lower, *Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: How does Wendy Lower change the commonly held belief that men fought on the front while women remained at home? Put differently, what do we learn about the participation of German women in the Holocaust?
- Sunday (7/16):
 - DO: Peer responses on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM).
 - DO: Weekly Reflection and News Content Curation assignment (due at 11:59 PM).

Week 5: The Holocaust

- Monday (7/17): The (Twisted) Road to Auschwitz
 - WATCH: Week 5 Lecture
 - PRIMARY SOURCE READING: The Stern Family from Frankfurt and Anti-Jewish Legislation (1933-1942).

***** First part of your Final Project (Curation) is due Tuesday, July 18, at 11:59 PM! *****

- Wednesday (7/19): The Holocaust by Bullets
 - READ: Chapters 1-3 (“The Photograph”/”Miropol”/”The *Aktion*”) in Wendy Lower, *The Ravine: A Family, a Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: How is the *Holocaust by Bullets* represented in Wendy Lower's book? Who are the perpetrators? Who are the collaborators? Should we, in your opinion, make a distinction between the two categories? Explain your answer.
- Thursday (7/20):
 - ATTEND: Open discussion between 12:00-1:00 PM [optional].
- Friday (7/21): From Ghettos to Killing Centers
 - READ: Chapter 6 (“Flashover”) in Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: Based on what you have read and learned, how did the Nazi killing centers differ from the *Holocaust by Bullets*? Why did the Germans switch their method of perpetration? And how did this change, in your opinion, the dynamics between perpetrator and victim?

- Sunday (7/23):
 - DO: Peer responses on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM).
 - DO: Weekly Reflection and News Content Curation assignment (due at 11:59 PM).

Week 6: Postwar (In)justice, Memory, and Legacies

- Monday (7/24): Postwar Trials and Legacies of WWII and the Holocaust
 - WATCH: Week 6 Lecture
 - PRIMARY SOURCE READING: UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN Definition of Genocide.
- Wednesday (7/26): Popular Culture and Holocaust Memory in the U.S.
 - READ: Chapter 1 (“From Silence to Salience”) in Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: How and why did the American public view of the Holocaust change during the postwar period? Refer to at least two key events. How can we today, as a society, promote Holocaust knowledge and awareness? What exactly should we emphasize when we try to explain the Holocaust and its lessons?
- Thursday (7/27):
 - ATTEND: Open discussion between 12:00-1:00 PM [optional].
- Friday (7/28): How Should We Remember WWII?
 - READ: Adam Tooze, “We Remember World War II Wrong” (Foreign Policy, May 7, 2020).
 - DO: Discussion post on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM):

- Q: Why does Adam Tooze think Americans remember World War II wrong? Please give some examples and touch on what Tooze thinks our collective memory of the war should include that it normally does not. What is, in your opinion, the most important lesson we should learn from WWII?
- Sunday (7/30):
 - DO: Peer responses on Canvas (due at 11:59 PM).
 - DO: Weekly Reflection and News Content Curation assignment (due at 11:59 PM).

***** Your Final Project (Podcast Episode) is due Sunday, July 30, at 11:59 PM! *****