

IS 123 World War II
Europe Semester, Fall 2020
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Major Themes for 2020 Europe Semester

Technology
War and Peace
Global Narratives in Literature
Current issues in Europe

Overview of Course

World War II had its roots in the end of the first World War (the war to end all wars) and left its imprint on the rest of the century (Marshall Plan, formation of Israel, the Cold War and the atomic age). We will study WWII chronologically with an emphasis on the European campaign but will include the lead-up to war, the war in the Pacific and the aftermath of the war. But as we travel through the different European countries we will also focus on the role of and the effect on each nation we visit. WWII was also the first war where technology was critical to the conflict and the resolution of the war but also forever changed society. This will lead to natural tie-ins with IS122 Technology and European Society. World War II also has a special intrigue in that we can look back at it with such crystal moral clarity yet every conflict that followed has been shrouded with moral ambiguity. Will the moral clarity remain as we look at the primary historical sources in studying the last “good war”?

Sites

Visits to historical sites and museums will be integral. Example sites include:

- Bletchley Park (early work in computing, breaking of Enigma code)
- Dover Castle and underground tunnels used in World War II
- Imperial War Museum - London
- Churchill War Rooms-London
- The Anne Frank House – Amsterdam
- Resistance Museum - Amsterdam
- Museum of the Army-- Paris
- Normandy Beach
- Caen Peace Museum
- Holocaust Museum - Berlin
- Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp
- Theresianstadt (Terezin) Ghetto
- Auschwitz & Auschwitz-Birkenau
- Israel Holocaust Museum

Topics

Topics for reading, writing, and discussion will include:

- Treaty of Versailles
- Hitler's rise to power in Germany
- Chamberlain's peace agreement at Munich
- Invasion of Poland
- The Failure of the Maginot Line and the Fall of Belgium and France
- Battle of Britain
- America first: the isolation movement
- Russia and the two Front War
- Lend-Lease and the U-Boats of the North Atlantic
- Code Breaking
- Pearl Harbor and Midway
- Charles deGaulle, Jean Moulin and the French Resistance
- The Holocaust and the Wannsee Conference
- Rommel and the North Africa Campaign
- From D-Day to the Battle of the Bulge
- Island hopping in the Pacific: Iwo Jima and Okinawa
- The Manhattan Project: Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- The Yalta Conference
- The Marshall Plan: rebuilding the defeated nations
- The formation of Israel
- The Cold War and the Atomic Age

General Education

This course satisfies the General Education requirement "Thinking Historically." The approved "Learning Outcome" for this GE category is:

"Students will be able to analyze historical sources with appropriate attention to their various contexts"

The core objectives, as described by General Education documents and tailored for this course, are:

- Develop awareness and appreciation for the particularities of time and place
- Develop a sense of the complex process of change and continuity over time.
- Develop the ability to work critically with a range of primary and secondary historical texts
- Develop appreciation for the art of constructing historical narrative.
- Appreciate the importance of historical context in shaping our understanding of the world in which we live
- Engage in thoughtful interpretive and historiographic discussions
- Practice constructing a historical narrative; understand the complexity of historical change

In this course there will be an emphasis on distinguishing primary from secondary sources and, as noted below, one of the papers should emphasize primary sources.

Primary Reading List:

- **Richard Overy.** *Why the Allies Won, 1995.*

Recommended Books: These will be books that the class as a whole will not read but groups within the class may read to develop their areas of interest.

A. Beevor, *Stalingrad* (1998).

Michael Howard, *The 30 Years War? The Two World Wars in Historical Perspective, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society pp171-184* (1993).

A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War (2nd ed.)* (1964).

WEB READINGS:

Primary Source Readings:

[The Versailles Treaty: June 28, 1919](#)

[Adolf Hitler's First Antisemitic Writing \(1919\)](#)

[A Hitler Speech from 4 May 1923 _try <http://comicism.tripod.com/230504.html>](#)

[The Nazi State as Described by the Nuremberg Trials:](#)

[Churchill on the Annexation of Austria](#)

[Munich Pact September 29, 1938](#)

[Great Britain's Response to Germany's Invasion of Poland](#)

[France's Response to Germany's Invasion of Poland](#)

[Charles Lindbergh: America First](#)

[Check out some recordings of FDR speeches](#)

[Lend-Lease, March 11, 1941](#)

[Japanese Documents on the Pearl Harbor Operation](#)

[Japanese-American Internment--Justification](#)

[Anger at Being Interned](#)

[Red Army Casualties, 1941-1945](#)

[Plans for Operation "Overlord", May-June 1944](#)

[The Rangers on Omaha Beach](#)

[George S. Patton's Speech to the Third U.S. Army](#)

[A German Account of Bastogne](#)

[The Surrender of Berlin, May 1945.](#)

[The Wanasee Protocol](#)

[The Yalta Conference, February 1945](#)

[Soviet Sources on the Cold War](#)

[Truman Doctrine, 12 March 1947](#)

Secondary Source Readings:

[Weimar Germany and the Rise of the Nazis](#)

[The Reichstag Fire](#)

[A Brief History of the Maginot Line](#)

[The Polish Campaign of 1939](#)

[Discovery Channel "Battle of Britain"](#)

[The Battle of Leningrad](#)

[Lend-Lease, March 11, 1941](#)

[The Myths of Pearl Harbor](#)

[A Priceless Advantage: U.S. Navy Communications Intelligence and the Battles of Coral Sea, Midway, and the Aleutians](#)

[The Decision to Invade North Africa \(Torch\)](#)

[The First Hours of D-Day on Omaha Beach](#)

[The Siege and Relief of Bastogne During the Battle of the Bulge](#)

[The Decision To Halt at the Elbe](#)

[Underground Europe](#)

[The Warsaw Uprising](#)

[Navajo Code Talkers in the U.S.M.C. in the Pacific Campaign](#)

[Marine Corps Amphibious Operations in the Pacific, 1943-1945](#)

[The Atomic Bombings of Japan: A 50-Year Retrospective](#)

[Time Line of WW2](#)

I would like to acknowledge Sam Houston State University and especially instructors James S. Olson, Nicholas Pappas and Joseph Rowe Jr. for most of the links to these resources.

Assignments:

During the summer, you will make a timeline of the war. Include significant events between WWI and WWII, the war itself and significant events after the war that can be tied to the war. Be considering what phases of the war (or life during the war) particularly interests you. Be considering which two or three European nations you'd like to particularly focus on.

There will be three main projects that will be ongoing during the course:

World War II: Country Reports: Small teams of students will be responsible for each of the countries we will be visiting. Before we arrive in a country, the group will make a presentation to the class. What was the role of the nation in World War II? What were the impacts to that country? What sites are worth visiting and why? How did the population of the country view the war? What was life like during the war? Was there

unity or disunity? Analyze the choices they made: were they wise, how else could they have proceeded? Don't just focus on what happened but why.

World War II: A chronology of the war: Here, either individually or in small groups, different phases of the war will be investigated (i.e. U-boats, codebreaking, invasions, the underground, Navy, Air Force, Manhattan project, or life in the nations, political decisions being made, etc.....). We will start with the inter-war period from WWI to WWII and go through the Cold War. There will be three essays total. Two of the essays will be roughly 1-3 pages (depending on how many writers) while the third will be an extended essay (2-6 pages, or roughly two pages per person). They will be posted on Canvas for your classmates to read. The first essay will be due during the summer before we leave and will be on the time frame of 1918-1941. In these essays you may use primary or secondary sources but in both cases read with a critical eye for contexts that might affect the information. Is there bias? Did they have sufficient access to convey reliable information? Is the information subject to interpretation?

Paper assignments: There will be two papers, each of roughly 5-7 pages (double spaced). The first will focus on the rise of Germany, the run-up to war and the first half of the war when Germany (and Japan) was on the rise. It can include the origins and early stages of the Holocaust. The first paper may be done during the summer but doesn't have to be. The second will look at how the war turned for the Allies and why early successes for the Axis turned to slow decline and defeat. It could also include not just the end of the war but the effect on Europe in the years that followed. It should be supported by both primary and secondary sources. It should reflect the wisdom that comes from observing decades later, yet convey the context in which actions or decisions were made. On one of the papers the focus should be on primary sources (and be identified as such). In it you must demonstrate the methods of analysis of primary sources. This includes knowledge about the genre, the author, the date and circumstance of composition as well as the audience for the source.

Papers versus Essays: Essays will focus more on information while papers will focus more on analysis. Essays can and should have a pretty narrow focus while papers give you the space to take on big picture issues.

Summer Assignments: As noted above, the summer assignments are the WW2 timeline, the first of the essays (pre WW2) and optionally the first paper.

There will be a final which will combine objective questions with essay questions.

Grades: There will be a timeline for 5%; the essays (2 + 1) will be worth 7%, 7%, 11% (total of 25%); the country reports will be 15%; The papers (2) will be 15% each for 30%; the final will be 25%.