

A351 World War II

Spring 2005
Prof. Chris Erickson
1:30-2:45 TTh, CM 112

Office Hrs: 12-1:15 TTh
and by appointment
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World War II, while it ended fifty years ago, is permanently etched in our collective memory. For many, the war was the "good" war - a necessary war where right and wrong were clearly demarcated, a war in which courageous, righteous allies confronted and defeated evil, militaristic dictators and the Nazi war machine. When compared to other wars, especially Vietnam, WWII seemed to be the last war that was worth fighting. Yet, in many instances, the public memories of the war - reflected in recent Hollywood films and popular books, magazine articles and news stories, museums and memorials -- are selective. As historian Michael Adams notes, World War II "has been converted over time from a complex, problematic event, full of nuance and debatable meaning, to a simple, shining legend of the Good War." We will be exploring the myths and memories of WWII as well as recognizing the amazing courage, determination, and fortitude of the participants.

This course will focus on the United States, but our country's participation in the war can be understood only in relation to experiences of other nations. As such, we'll begin with the Great War, since the origins of WWII rest there. We'll make our way through the troubled 1920s and 1930s, the rise of dictators, fascism, and militarism, and in the U.S., the rise of isolationism. From the Munich conference in 1938 to Potsdam in 1945, from Hitler's march into Poland in 1939 to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, we'll analyze and discuss the major events of the war itself.

We will also explore the homefront and American culture. World War II dramatically affected all aspects of our society, including the movement for black civil rights, the entrance of middle-class, married women into the workplace, and the internment of over 10,000 Japanese-Americans.

This is not a military history course, although we will briefly discuss the strategies and tactics of both the Allies and the Axis powers in the European and Pacific theatres. In this context, special attention will be paid to the most important battles of the war, as well as on the new technology and weapons of modern warfare.

Required Books

The following four books are *required* and you will find them in the university bookstore.

Michael Adams, *The Best War Ever* (1994)

Michael Lyons, *World War II: A Short History*, 4th edition (2004)

Mark A. Stoler and Melanie Gustafson, *Major Problems in the History of World War II* (2003)

J. Douglas Smith and Richard Jensen, *World War II on the Web: A Guide to the Very Best Sites* (2003)

You might find the timeline for the war in Europe useful (Smith/Jensen, p. 46) as well as the timeline for the war in the Pacific (Smith/Jensen, p. 59).

Also, my personal copy of *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (2001) is on two-hour reserve at the Helmke Library. This is a useful encyclopedia on the war and includes maps and a chronology of events.

Course Requirements

This is an upper division U.S. history course. I will expect you to complete the assigned reading for the day, come to classes on time (and stay for the entire period) prepared to listen and discuss the topic at hand. This class will be a combination of lectures and discussions (large and small group), with some videos and slides thrown in for good measure. We will also take advantage of the extensive documentation of the war on the web. Please bring the assigned readings to class (mainly *Major Problems*) on the days we discuss them.

There will be one midterm, one final exam, and one 12-15 page research paper. I will elaborate on the research paper later in class. Note: you *must* write the research paper to pass the class.

The two exams and the research paper will each count for about 1/3 of the final grade. In borderline cases, I will take into account your attendance and participation.

Finally, please turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers, etc., while you are in class!

Schedule

Note: the following is not set in stone and may be changed.

January 11: Introduction to the Course

Stoler/Gustafson, Russert and Weinberg essays, pp. 23-40
Adams, chapter 1

January 13: Origins of World War II

Lyons, chapters 1-2

January 18: Hitler and Germany

Lyons, chapter 3

Smith/Jensen, Adolf Hitler, p. 27: Adolf Hitler on the Annihilation of the Jews, 1919; The Beer Hall Putsch, 1923; Mein Kampf (excerpts); Hitler and the Jewish Question, 1939; Adolf Hitler signs an order authorizing involuntary Euthanasia in Germany.

Browse S/J, German Propaganda Archive, p. 49: Visual Material, Nazi-Era Posters

January 20: The Road to War: The 1930s

Lyons, chapter 4

Adams, chapter 2

S/J, Avalon Project, p. 7: Tripartite Pact and Associated Documents

January 25: War Begins: Poland, Blitzkrieg, Britain

Lyons, chapters 5-8

S/J, Avalon Project, p. 7: Germany's Invasion of Poland, Proclamation by Adolf Hitler 9/3/1939

S/J, Life and Times of W. Churchill, p. 25: Speeches and Quotes, Speeches, "Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat"; "Their Finest Hour" (Skim, except for last five paragraphs)

January 27: Germany, N. Africa, Soviet Union

Lyons, chapters 9-11

February 1: U.S. Isolationism and Neutrality in the 1920s and 30s

Stoler/Gustafson, Documents 1-5, pp. 1-5.

Research Paper Topic due!

February 3: Pearl Harbor

S/G, Documents 6-8, pp. 17-23.

Lyons, chapter 12

S/J, Maps of World War II, p. 10: Pacific Theater, 1941-1942, Japanese approach to Pearl Harbor, Attack on Pearl Harbor

S/J, Browse Pearl Harbor Photo Archive

February 8: Mobilization

Lyons, "American Giant," p. 243

Lyons, "Mobilization of U.S. Industry," pp. 244-5.

Lyons, "Feeding the Nation and More," pp. 247-8.

S/G, chapter 2 (except documents 2, 3, and 8)

Adams, chapter 4

S/J, American War Library, p. 6: U.S. Weapon Production (1942-1945)

February 10: A Global Allied Strategy

S/G, chapter 3

Lyons, chapter 16

S/J, Avalon Project, p. 7: Cairo Conference, 1943, Casablanca, 1943, Tehran, 1943

February 15: The Pacific Theater: 1941-1943

Lyons, chapters 13-14

Adams, chapter 3, pp. 58-68

S/G, chapter 5

S/J, Maps of World War II, p. 10, Battle of the Coral Sea, Midway.

S/J, Douglas MacArthur, p. 29, Timeline 1941-1945.

February 17: The European Theater: 1942-43

Lyons, chapters 15, 17-19

S/G, Documents 1-4, pp. 109-118

S/G, Overy and Sherry essays, pp. 135-155

Adams, chapter 3, pp. 43-58

February 22: MIDTERM EXAM**February 24: Flygirls: Women in the Military**

S/G, Document 3, pp. 48-49

March 1: Soldiers

S/G, Doubler essay, pp. 156-169

Adams, chapter 5

S/J, MacArthur, p. 29, Special Features, The Fight in the Philippines (read all first hand accounts)

Browse one of these three websites in S/J, A Marine Diary, p. 84, To Hell and Back, p. 85, or Twelve Hundred Days, p. 86.

Research statement and bibliography due!

March 3: Homefront: Blacks and Mexican-Americans

Adams, chapter 6

S/G pp. 211-212; Document 1, pp. 213-215; Documents 6 and 7, pp. 220-224;

Escobar essay, pp. 238-245

March 8-10: SPRING BREAK!**March 15: Homefront: Women and Labor**

Finish Adams, chapter 6

S/G, Document 2, p. 215, Document 5, pp. 217-220, Document 8, pp. 224-226, Anderson essay, pp. 231-238

March 17: Homefront: Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors

S/G, review Document 1, pp. 44-47; Document 2, pp. 47-8

March 22: Homefront: Japanese Internment

S/G, Document 8, pp. 56-57; Document 3, p. 216; Document 9, pp. 227-230

Browse one of two websites in S/J, Confinement and Ethnicity, p. 100 (note change of web address:

http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anthropology74/index.htm

Or Evacuation and Internment of San Francisco Japanese, p. 101.

March 24: Wartime Culture

S/G, chapter 7

Browse 1-2 websites in S/J: Produce for Victory, p. 107, Powers of Persuasion, p. 106, or WWII Poster Collection, p. 163.

March 29: The U.S. and the Holocaust

S/G, chapter 9

S/J, The History Place: Adolf Hitler, p. 28, Auschwitz Today, Photo Essay; Mud and Guts, p. 80, Dachau; The Holocaust from the Jewish Virtual Library, p. 130, History of the Holocaust. Also, browse U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, p. 135.

March 31: Berga**April 5: Science and Technology in Wartime**

S/G, chapter 8

April 7: Wartime Diplomacy

S/G, chapter 10

April 12: The End in Sight

Lyons, chapters 21-24

S/J, Maps of World War II, p. 10, Normandy, 1944; Normandy 1944, p. 45 (note new address:

<http://search.eb.com/normandy>, World War II Maps U. of Texas, p. 11, D-Day Maps.

April 14: The Battle of the Bulge**April 19: The Atomic Bomb**

Lyons, chapter 26

S/G, chapter 11

S/J, Atomic Bomb: Decision, p. 65, Trinity Test, July 16, 1945, Eyewitness Accounts, choose three or four accounts. Also, Szilard Petition, July 17, 1945

S/J, Avalon Project, p. 7, Potsdam Conference (skim)

S/J, Life and Times of Winston Churchill, Speeches and Quotes, To V-E Day Crowds.

April 21: A New World: Legacies of WWII

S/G, chapter 12

Adams, chapter 7 and Afterword

Lyons, Aftermath, pp. 329-334

April 26, 28: READING WEEK

May 5 Thursday 1:00-3:00 p.m. FINAL EXAM