

George Mason University
Department of History

History 387 004/History 389 001
The Second World War
Fall 2022

Professor Christopher H. Hamner
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Office hours: Zoom, by appointment

Nguyen Engineering Building, 1103
Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00-10:15
[BlackBoard site](#)

The Second World War raged from the late 1930s until August of 1945. By the time Japan signed the final Instrument of Surrender, more than 60 million people—the majority of them civilians—had lost their lives in the fighting. The war raged across the globe, involving all the world’s major powers, and combat occurred on four continents, in the sky, on the oceans and under the seas. The war changed geopolitics in ways that reverberated throughout the twentieth century and continue to this day.

This course traces the causes, course, and outcome of the greatest calamity in human history. It examines the political, social, and economic issues that led to war; the home fronts, war leadership, diplomacy, combat motivation, and grand strategy; the Holocaust; the political and social legacies of the conflict; and the way that nations remember and commemorate the war.

Reading List

Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War 1939-1945*

Primary Source packet (attached)

Grading

Course performance will be determined by your participation in class, two written assignments, and a final exam. There are seven separate opportunities to complete the written assignments, and, as the writing handout indicates, each assignment is different in both topic and form. You must do one of the first four assignments and one of the last three assignments. Within those guidelines, you are free to choose two assignments that fit your interests and schedule.

Assignments are due in class on the date indicated on the syllabus. You can submit your essay through the BlackBoard portal.

No late assignments will be accepted. No exceptions.

You are also free to do *more* than two of the assignments; in that case, your two highest scores will count towards your final grade, and the lower scores will be dropped. The system is intended to give you maximum flexibility; do not allow that flexibility to create problems for you. **If you have not completed two assignments by the end of the course, you will receive a failing grade of 50 for each missing assignment.**

The final grade will break down as follows:

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Participation: | 10% |
| First paper: | 30% |
| Second paper: | 30% |
| Final Exam: | 30% |

Papers are due at 5pm on the following days:

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| First paper: | September 26 |
| Second paper: | October 3 |
| Third paper: | October 12 |
| Fourth paper: | October 26 |
| Fifth paper: | November 9 |
| Sixth paper: | November 21 |
| Seventh paper: | November 30 |

The grading scale is as follows:

A- 90-93; A 94-100

B- 80-83; B 84-86; B+ 87-89

C- 70-73; C 74-76; C+ 77-79

D 64-66; D+ 67-69

F 50

COURSE POLICIES:

A note on plagiarism. Each assignment completed as part of this course is bound by the University's Honor Code and its strict rules regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism entails presenting someone else's words, work, or ideas without proper acknowledgement, or borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment. Whether the source is another historical work, an internet source, a classmate, or your roommate does not matter; failure to cite the source properly constitutes plagiarism, the most serious academic violation one can commit. Students found plagiarizing in this class will fail the course. These assignments are designed so that it is easier to simply write the essay than to cheat.

Classroom Behavior. Active participation in class discussions is a vital part of mastering this set of skills and information. (Individual participation is weighted as ten percent of the overall grade to reflect its critical importance.) In order to maximize opportunities for every student to participate constructively and to minimize distractions, a few simple guidelines will be observed:

- civil, respectful interactions among *all* class participants

- **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES**—cell phones, smart phones, laptops, and so on. If it runs on electricity and it does not fulfill a medical requirement, switch it off for the duration of class.

Class Schedule and Readings

- 22 August. **Introductions and expectations: What do historians do, exactly?**
- 24 August. **Historical thinking: Analyzing sources**
Neil Halloran, “The Fallen of World War II,”
film available at <https://vimeo.com/128373915>
- 29 August. **Historical thinking: Interpreting sources**
Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945*, xv-xx
- 31 August. **The First World War and the roots of the Second**
Document A: Georges Clemenceau on the Treaty of Versailles (1919)
- 7 September. **Nazism and ideology**
Document B: John Maynard Keynes on the German economy (1919)
Document C: New York *Times* article (21 November 1922)
- 12 September. **1939**
Hastings, *Inferno*, 3-25;
Document D: Adolf Hitler, speech before the Reichstag (30 January, 1937), excerpt
- 14 September. **1940**
Inferno, 26-51;
Document E: Winston Churchill, speech to the House of Commons (18 June 1940), excerpt
- 19 September. **America in the interwar years**
Inferno, 52-76;
Document F: Charles Lindbergh radio address “Neutrality and War” (13 October 1939)
- 21 September. **1941**
Inferno, 77-101;
Document G: Franklin Roosevelt to a Joint Session of Congress (8 December 1941)
audio available at http://www.radiochemistry.org/history/video/fdr_infamy.html
- 26 September. **States mobilize for war**
Inferno, 102-136;
Document H: Adolf Hitler’s speech to the workers of Berlin (10 December 1940), excerpt
Document: Frank Capra, *Why We Fight: Prelude to War* (1942)
film available at https://youtu.be/wcAsIWfk_z4
- FIRST PAPER DUE**
- 28 September. **The Eastern Front**
Inferno, 137-161
Document I: Josef Stalin, Order No. 227 (28 July 1942)
- 3 October. **Race and the Second World War**
Inferno, 162-179;
Document J: Office of War Information posters (1942-1944)
- SECOND PAPER DUE**
- 5 October. **1942**
Inferno, 180-197;
Document K: William Hoffman diary (1942), excerpt
- 10 October **FALL BREAK—CLASS SHIFTS TO TUESDAY**

- 11 October. **The war in the Pacific**
Inferno, 198-263;
 Document L: Isao Matsuo to parents (28 October 1944)
 Document M: Teruo Yamaguchi to father (June 1945)
- 12 October. **The Holocaust**
Inferno, 480-507;
 Document N: Minutes of the Wannsee Conference (20 January 1942), excerpt
THIRD PAPER DUE
- 17 October. **History and memory: Hollywood's Second World War**
 Document O: Office of War Information, Motion Picture Bureau "Feature Report: *Casablanca*" (1942)
- 19 October. **The war at sea**
Inferno, 264-292;
 Document P: Winston Churchill, Speech to the House of Commons (11 February 1943), excerpt
- 24 October. **1943**
Inferno, 293-315; 351-386; 414-426;
 Document Q: Ernie Pyle, "The Death of Captain Waskow" (8 January 1944)
- 26 October. **The soldiers' experience in battle**
Inferno, 316-327
 Document: War Department Film Bulletin no. 181, "Automatic Weapons: American vs. German" (1945)
 film available at <https://youtu.be/Oyj-ZHXFKQI>
FOURTH PAPER DUE
- 31 October. **The home fronts**
Inferno, 328-350
 Document R: Office of War Information posters (1943-1944)
- 2 November. **1944**
Inferno, 427-454; 508-539;
 Document S: Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Order of the Day" (1944)
- 7 November. **Civil rights in wartime: Black Americans**
Inferno, 387-413;
 Document T: Langston Hughes, "Beaumont to Detroit" (1943)
- 9 November. **Civil rights in wartime: Japanese-Americans**
 Document U: Lt. Gen. J.L. DeWitt's letter of transmittal of his *Final Report; Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast 1942* (5 June 1943), excerpt
FIFTH PAPER DUE
- 14 November. **The air war and the strategic bombing campaign**
Inferno, 455-479
 Document V: Edward R. Murrow, radio broadcast (20 September 1940), excerpt
 audio available at billdownscbs.blogspot.com/2015/09/1940-edward-r-murrow-from-london.html
- 16 November. **1945**
Inferno, 540-576;
 Document W: United States Army Air Forces leaflet (August 1945)

- 21 November. **History and Memory: The Smithsonian *Enola Gay* exhibit**
 Inferno, 611-629;
 Document X: S.Res.257 — 103rd Congress (1993-1994)
 SIXTH PAPER DUE
- 28 November. **The Allied victory and the roots of the Cold War**
 Inferno, 577-610; 630-651
 Document Y: Surreptitiously taped conversations among German nuclear physicists at Farm
 Hall (6-7 August 1945), excerpt
- 30 November. **History and Memory: World War II cemeteries**
 Document: War Department Official Film, Misc. 1317 “Decision” (1946)
 film available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVuqaEinlM>
 SEVENTH PAPER DUE

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 8:30am—10:00am