

History 357: World War II

Lecture: MWF, 12:05-12:55 pm

Discussion: W 3:30-4:20 pm, W 4:35-5:25 pm, R 8:50-9:40 am, and R 9:55-10:45 am.

Instructor: Dr. Ben Shannon

Email: btshannon@wisc.edu

Office: 5269 Mosse Humanities

Office Hours: W, 1:30-3:30 pm (and by appt.)

Teaching Assistant: Alex Scheepens

Email: scheepens@wisc.edu

Course Description

World War II was not only the most important global event of the twentieth century, 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. The upheaval created by this conflict displaced millions of people and transformed the map of the world. On an ideological level, the war marked the end of fascism as a viable political system, the beginning of the Cold War struggle between Western Liberalism and Soviet-style Communism, and a shift toward decolonization in non-European lands. This course will explore these issues by examining World War II in the broadest context, tracing both its long-term causes and lasting effects. 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. Through lecture, discussion, and engagement with primary source documents, students will emerge from this course with a better understanding of the political, social, and ideological aspects of the Second World War.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Identify key concepts and themes in the history of World War II
- Analyze historical primary sources and understand their significance
- Construct arguments by comparing two or more primary source documents
- Clearly communicate information, both verbally and through the written word

Student Workload

This 4-credit course meets as a group for 4 hours per week (according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy, each 50-minute class counts as 1 hour). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 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 at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course.

Grades

Grades are based on the following scale:

100-93 = A
92-88 = A/B
87-83 = B
82-77 = B/C
76-70 = C
69-60 = D
59-0 = F

Final grades will be calculated accordingly:

Source Analysis (500 words) = 5%
Comparative Analysis (1000 words) = 15%
Final Paper (1500 words) = 30%
Final Exam 25%
Discussion 25%

(For the full version of this syllabus, contact me at btshannon@wisc.edu)