

HSTR 115: The Second World War

BJC McKercher, FRHistS

TWF: 12:30-1:20 PM

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Course Description:

This course examines the history of the Second World – its origins, course, and ending. Apart from its important military dimension on land, air, and sea, this war had other equally crucial elements: intra-allied diplomacy, the development of war aims, the question of ideology versus national interest, economics and finance, race, the impact of fighting on societies in Europe and East Asia, and the importance of personality and policy. Unlike the First World War, the Second was a truly global struggle, a total war that proved especially lethal to civilian populations. Understanding how and why it was fought and the policies that the war lords in each major belligerent Power pursued is fundamental to the course of international relations history in the twentieth century.

Requirements:

1. Research Proposal and Bibliography	due 31 January 2020	15%
2. Research Paper	due 24 March 2020	45%
3. Final Examination		40%

STUDENTS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT BY RULE OF THE UNIVERSITY, THEY MUST COMPLETE ALL PARTS OF THE COURSE – (1) RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHY, (2) RESEARCH PAPER, AND (3) FINAL EXAMINATION -- TO RECEIVE A PASSING GRADE.

Research Proposal and Bibliography:

You must submit a short proposal (2-3 pages of double-spaced text) to explain the research question that you are seeking to answer in your research paper. It must include an initial bibliography with six books and six articles – and, of course, as you research and write the paper, this initial bibliography will probably change; if you decide to change your topic, no problem. But if you decide to do so, please see me so that we can go over it and ensure your initial bibliography will be helpful.

Research Paper:

The research paper should be 3,000 to 4,000 words in length, including notes (about 10 to 15 pages excluding the bibliography), and *it must be typed and double-spaced* – I will not correct any paper exceeding 15 pages.¹ The bibliography – which must be included – is not part of the word count. It can be on any topic you want in terms of the general subjects

¹ In this sense, it must be on regular letter size paper, with margins of one-inch top, bottom, and sides, and in 12-pitch Times New Roman font. There must be a title. And remember to include both your name and student number.

covered in the course. If you have any questions or seek clarification on any issue dealing with the term papers, please see me. My office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM. But if these times are difficult for you, I can make special arrangements to see you at any time.

I want you to treat these papers seriously. Not only do they allow you to write about an issue you find interesting, they will give you an opportunity to think, research, and write in a historical way. If possible, although this might be difficult in some instances, I would like you to use *a few primary materials in preparing your paper*. Primary materials are documents like diaries, letters, official despatches, telegrams, speeches, newspapers, and so on written at the time. Our Library here is amongst the best in Canada in its holdings of such materials, many of which have been published in book form. If you feel especially adventurous, you might wish to look at microfilm, but I leave this to you. Late papers will be penalized 5% for each day.

Exams:

The final examination will be in essay format and will draw upon material from lectures and readings. Examination grades will be determined by the directness, pertinence, and comprehensiveness of each answer. Makeup examinations will be possible only in cases of a documented medical or family emergency.

Readings

It is up to you to read the sections of the textbook that relate to the topics covered in lectures. Our text is Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms. A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge).

Introduction

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| Topic 1 | The Second World War and Modern History |
| Topic 2 | Great Powers and National Interests: The Nature of the Interwar World, 1919-1939 |
| Topic 3 | Germany's Messiah: Adolf Hitler and the Development of Axis Foreign Policy, 1933-1939 |
| Topic 4 | From the Balance of Power to Appeasement: Britain, France, and the Constellation of International Power, 1933-1939 |
| Topic 5 | How War Came: From Prague to the Polish Crisis, March-September 1939 |
| Topic 6 | Exploiting the Crisis: The Phoney War and Soviet Russian Expansion, September 1939-February 1940 |

- Topic 7 Meeting the Crisis: The Phoney War and Anglo-French-German Relations, October 1939-May 1940
- Topic 8 Hitler as a War Lord
- Topic 9 Churchill as a War Lord
- Topic 10 A German Success: The Fall of France, May-June 1940
- Topic 11 Mussolini as a War Lord
- Topic 12 A German Failure: Britain Faces the Axis Alone, June 1940-June 1941
- Topic 13 The New Order: Nazi Germany and Continental Europe, June 1940-June 1941
- Topic 14 Axis Crisis: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Balkans, December 1940-June 1941
- Topic 15 Hitler's Gamble?: Operation Barbarossa, June-December 1941
- Topic 16 Stalin as a War Lord
- Topic 17 The Neutral Ally: The United States, September 1939-December 1941
- Topic 18 Roosevelt as a War Lord
- Topic 19 War, Diplomacy, and the East Asian Balance of Power: Imperial Japan and Japanese Militarists, July 1937-December 1941
- Topic 20 Britain, America, and the Special Relationship: The Construction of the Anglo-American Alliance, December 1941-March 1942
- Topic 21 The Brutal Struggle: Hitler, Stalin, and the Russo-German War, January 1942-November 1943
- Topic 22 A New East Asian Order: The Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere and War and Diplomacy in East Asia, 1941-1944
- Topic 23 Grinding Down the Axis: The Anglo-American Peripheral Strategy and the Casablanca Conference, March 1942-January 1943
- Topic 24 *Judenfrei*: German Racial Policies and the Holocaust, June 1941-December 1943
- Topic 25 The Axis Cracks: The Anglo-American Peripheral Strategy, the Fall of Mussolini, and the Invasion of Italy, May 1943-December 1943
- Topic 26 The 'Big Three' and Allied War Aims: The Teheran Conference, November 1943

- Topic 27 Cross-Channel Invasion: Britain, America, and D-Day, November 1943-July 1944
- Topic 28 Ideology and National Interest: Soviet Russia, Poland, and Growing Soviet Control of Eastern Europe, July-September 1944
- Topic 29 East Asian Quagmire: Japan, and the War in China, 1943-1944
- Topic 30 Diplomacy and the Vision of a Post-war Order: The Yalta Conference, February 1945
- Topic 31 *Gotterdammerung*: The Defeat of Germany, February-May 1945
- Topic 32 Realities of Diplomacy: The Potsdam Conference, July 1945
- Topic 33 The Atomic Bomb and National Survival: The Defeat of Japan, February-September 1945
- Topic 34 The Post-war Order Arrives: The End of the Second World War and the Advent of the Cold War, 1945-1946
- Topic 35 Drawing Conclusions about the Second World War