

World War II in World History History 506:115

Summer Session II: June 27–August 5, 2022

Online Course: Synchronous & Asynchronous

Synchronous Time: Tuesday Synchronous Zoom 6:00 pm– 9:40pm



Instructor: Rong Aries Li

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Office Hours: Students can meet me after our Tuesday Zoom meetings OR by appointment through email

Course Description:

This course complicates the oversimplified and mythologized view of the Second World War as the “Good War” fought by the “Greatest Generation.” By taking a global approach and studying the war as a whole, this course explores World War II as the most violent, destructive, and consequential conflict in human history. It was a total war that mobilized states and societies across the globe, permeating all aspects of life. World War II was fought not only for the control of territory, people, and resources, but for the realization of distinct visions about human nature and social order. World War II purposely and disproportionately targeted civilian lives: it killed over 50 million people, devastated cities from Hamburg to Warsaw, Stalingrad, Tokyo, and Chongqing, and turned wide parts of the Eurasian continent into wastelands. The war and its aftermath rewrote the global political landscape, bringing down traditional colonial empires, producing new nations, and a new world order. As the bloodiest event in world history, the war is palpable throughout the world to the present day.

This course does not require any background in history, and welcomes the perspectives of

students from different disciplines into the classroom.

Major Questions to Consider:

This course examines political, military, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of World War II. For this purpose, we will read and analyze a wide range of engaging primary and secondary sources, which include governmental documents, literary accounts, historical photos, cartoons, films and documentaries.

Here are the major questions that we will consider in this course:

- What were the origins of World War II? How was it prefigured by the Great War?
- How did different political regimes mobilize for the conduct of war, and how did their efforts resonate on the social and individual levels? Did soldiers and civilians in various parts of the world relate to the war in similar terms, or did they fight for different things, and endured in different ways?
- How did the war transform individual lives and the social and political landscapes?
- How did race, gender, and sexuality play into the war?
- How have societies and people engaged with memories and legacies of World War II?
- Can World War II be understood simply as a moral contest between good and evil, or was it rather a vicious or senseless exercise in universal destruction?

Course Learning Goals:

1. This course meets SAS Core learning goal for Historical Analysis.
2. Develop a critical understanding of the events and impacts of World War II on human societies in a global context.
3. Read and analyze primary and secondary sources critically. Learn how to use them as evidence to make historical arguments.
4. Write essays and give public presentation that persuasively present an analytical and historical argument using primary and secondary source materials.

Course Assignments and Grading:

1. Discussions (synchronous and asynchronous discussions and other class activities) (40%): To earn full credit, students need to participate synchronous Zoom discussions and complete asynchronous discussion assignments. You need to actively and thoughtfully engage with the course materials and each other. So please complete all the reading and activities for each module and share your ideas, comments, and questions. For synchronous Zoom meetings, students should join on time and remain for the entire class and be respectful to your classmates. For asynchronous discussions of each week, students need to complete them before the week ends.
2. Writing Assignments (40%): This course has two take-home essays (about 600-800 words each in length). For each essay, you will be asked to present your argument to the questions based on a close reading and analysis of assigned primary and secondary sources. You will receive a handout for each essay which includes the questions and instructions. We will discuss essay writing as well as grading criteria in class.
3. Final Presentation (20%): During our last meeting, each student will do an 10-12 minutes presentation on an issue of your choice in the history of World War II that has complicated impacts on humans societies. Students should communicate with the instructor regarding their

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topic before the presentation. Students need to make an argument on the issue based on their analysis of primary and secondary sources. Students are expected to incorporate assigned course materials as part of their sources. Students are also expected to incorporate visual materials as evidence into their presentation. A handout with more detailed instructions will be provided.

Final course grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

- A 90 & above
- B+ 85-89
- B 80-84
- C+ 75-79
- C 70-74
- D 60-69
- F 59 & below

Course Readings:

Reading assignments will include secondary sources (e.g. book chapters, scholarly articles) and primary sources (e.g. historical documents, propaganda posters, political cartoons, memoirs, etc.). Most of the primary and secondary sources will be available on our Canvas course site.

Textbook:

John Ferris and Evan Mawdsley eds., *The Cambridge History of World War II: A New History* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), Volumes 1-3. We will read some chapters of these volumes. Rutgers Library offers FREE digital copies of these volumes.

Volume 1 Fighting the War, available at <https://doi-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/10.1017/CHO9781139855969>

Volume 2 Politics and Ideology, available at <https://doi-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/10.1017/CHO9781139524377>

Volume 3 Total War: Economy, Society and Culture, available at <https://doi-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/10.1017/CHO9781139626859>

To view them, you need to log in with your Rutgers NetID and password.

Course Policies:

1. Complete the weekly readings and all types of assignments on time. Keep up with the weekly modules to the best of your ability. Participate actively, thoughtfully, and respectfully in synchronous and asynchronous discussions as well as other class activities.
2. Lateness penalty will be applied to written assignments. One letter grade will be taken off when papers are one week later than the original due date, for example, from A to B. The only exceptions will be for documented illness or exceptional personal/family problems. If you face serious extenuating circumstances that prevent you from keep up with the course schedule and deadlines, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/>), so that they can provide the necessary support to ensure that you do not fall further behind in all your courses.
3. Students must not post any screenshots, photos, or videos of the class meetings on social media without getting written permission from everyone in the class. Students must not share

links and codes for online class meetings on social media or with others who are not enrolled without written permission from the instructor.

4. Copyright: Lectures and materials utilized in this course are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. It is not acceptable to share course materials with others who are not currently enrolled in this course or post any course materials to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without explicit permission from the instructor.

5. Academic integrity. All written work should be composed in the student's own words, and the ideas of others should be properly cited. Plagiarism is taking someone else's words, ideas or argument without acknowledging them appropriately. If you use the exact words taken from a source, they must be put in quotation marks and a reference; if you paraphrase, give the source a reference. Please familiarize yourself with the History Department's statement on plagiarism (<https://history.rutgers.edu/academics/undergraduate/plagiarism>) and the University's policy on academic integrity (<https://nbprovost.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-students>).

6. Students with Disabilities: Students who need accommodations based on the impact of a disability should register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at Rutgers. Documentation is required in advance from ODS before accommodations can be made for assignments. Please visit ODS's website for more information (<https://ods.rutgers.edu>).

Rutgers Student Support Resources:

Office of the Dean of Students: <http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/>

Office of Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu>

Rutgers Resources for Student Success: <http://success.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers Universitywide COVID-19 Information: <https://coronavirus.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers Learning Centers Remote Instruction: https://rlc.rutgers.edu/remote_instruction

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS): <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance: <http://vpva.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers Student Technology Resources: <https://it.rutgers.edu/technology-guide/students/>

If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email the Dean of Students (deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu) for assistance.

Office of Financial Aid: <https://financialaid.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers Student Food Pantry: <http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/>

Schedule of Classes and Reading Assignments

Notes:

1. This is a very condensed course consisted of six weeks. We will focus on a specific theme each week.
2. The assigned readings listed below only include secondary sources. Primary source readings will be include in each week's modules.
3. The assigned readings listed with a synchronous meeting below are due that day before the class meets.

4. The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and content as warranted by the ongoing public health emergency or other unforeseen events.

Week 1 Introduction & The Road to World War II

Synchronous Meeting: Tuesday June 28

Secondary Source Readings for your asynchronous study time:

1. Robert Gerwarth, “The Axis: Germany, Japan and Italy on the Road to War,” in textbook, Volume 1, 21–42.
2. Talbot Imlay, “Western Allied Ideology, 1939–1945,” in textbook, Volume 1, 43-67.

Discussion: What were the origins of the Second World War? What was World War II for?

Week 2 World War II Campaigns: Military and Propaganda

Synchronous Meeting: Tuesday July 5

Readings due before Synchronous Meeting: “Anglo–American Strategic Bombing, 1940–1945,” in textbook, Volume 1, 485–526.

Secondary source readings for your asynchronous study time:

Jo Fox, “The Propaganda War”, in textbook, Volume 2, 91–116.

Discussion:

1. How should we evaluate strategic bombing and the use of atomic bombs?
2. How did different political regimes mobilize for the conduct of war? How did wartime propaganda portray allies and enemies?

Week 3 Resistance, Collaboration, and Everyday Life during World War II

Synchronous Meeting: Tuesday July 11

Readings due before Synchronous Meeting: Margherita Zanasi, “Collaboration, Resistance and Accommodation in Northeast Asia,” in textbook, Volume 2, 509–532.

Secondary source readings for your asynchronous study time: Lizzie Collingham, “The Human Fuel: Food as Global Commodity and Local Scarcity,” in textbook, Volume 3, 149–173.

Discussion: How were ordinary people’s experience of World War II? Are categories like “resistance” and “collaboration” enough to describe people’s experience of World War II?

Week 4 Race, Gender, and Sexuality during World War II

Synchronous Meeting: Tuesday July 18

Readings due before Synchronous Meeting: Jürgen Matthäus, “Nazi Genocides,” in textbook, Volume 2, 162–180.

Secondary source readings for your asynchronous study time: Sabine Frühstück, “Sexuality and Sexual Violence,” in textbook, Volume 3, 422–466.

Discussion: How did race, gender, and sexuality play into World War II?

Week 5 Aftermath: Postwar Trials, Post-1945 World Order & Memories and Legacies of World War II

Synchronous Meeting: Tuesday July 25

Readings due before Synchronous Meeting: Rana Mitter, “Nationalism, Decolonization, Geopolitics and the Asian Post-war,” in textbook, Volume 3, 599–621.

Secondary source readings for your asynchronous study time: Jie-hyun Lim, “The Second World War in Global Memory Space,” in textbook, Volume 3, 698–724.

Discussion: 1. How were justice served in the post-World War II trials? 2. How did World War II change the world order? 3. How have memories of World War II developed in different countries and societies? How do we evaluate the historical lessons that people drew from World War II?

Week 6 Final Presentation on Tuesday, August 1