

## History 385C: World War II

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Elliott Hall: (740) 368-3634  
Office Hours: M 9:30-10:50 / W 4-5 / F 2-4 (or by appt.)

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### Overview:

This seminar will examine the most destructive conflict in human history. The Second World War spread devastation across three continents and claimed the lives of tens of millions of soldiers and civilians. It also revealed the horrors of Hiroshima and the Holocaust. But at the same time, the war turned the U.S. into a military and economic superpower. And it transformed American politics and society, with important consequences for the decades to come.

### Texts:

- Mark Stoler and Melanie Gustafson, eds., Major Problems in the History of World War II\*
- John Morton Blum, V Was for Victory\*
- Justus Doenecke and Mark Stoler, Debating the Foreign Policies of FDR, 1933-1945\*
- Stephen Ambrose, Band of Brothers\*
- Thomas Childers, Wings of Morning\*
- Eugene Sledge, With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa\*
- John Hersey, Hiroshima\*
- Elie Wiesel, Night\*

*All texts are available at the bookstore. The \* indicates that the text is also on reserve in the library. For changes or updates, please consult Blackboard.*

### Requirements:

- Serve as **discussion leader** for a reading I assign (with your input). Use the Internet to offer information about the author (s). Use reviews (if appropriate) to develop ideas and insights about the text (s). Prepare an outline of the discussion and a list of questions or issues (with page numbers). Bring a copy of both for me.
- Serve as **discussion facilitator** when selected at random. Have a list of important questions or issues (with page numbers) to discuss – I will collect it after class.
- Prepare three **reading essays** (700-800 words) on the texts of your choice. The essays are due in class the day we discuss the reading and should analyze – not summarize – an issue, theme, or idea that is central to the work and that you find interesting or controversial. Offer a thesis with which a reasonable person could disagree. Support personal opinions with specific references. *You may not submit an essay on the same day that you serve as discussion leader.* The first essay is due by week four at the latest. I will drop the lowest of the three grades that you receive. I will not accept late essays.

- Complete a **reading worksheet** (see Blackboard) for all texts (other than Major Problems) after you have served as discussion facilitator, when you are not the discussion leader, or if you have not written a reading essay.
- Submit a **final paper** (2000-2500 words). Choose one of the following or define a topic of your own (but see me in advance for approval):
  - Option A:** Was World War II truly a “good war”? Why or why not? Define the phrase and offer a clear thesis. Also use at least three texts and consider opposing views.
  - Option B:** Compare and contrast either Wings of Morning and Band of Brothers or Night and Hiroshima. How are they similar and/or different? Which is more powerful? Why? Consider style, structure, intent, and perspective. Offer a clear thesis and coherent argument – do not merely summarize or review the books.
- Double space with standard margins. Include page numbers and a title page. Use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations (e.g. Blum, p. 439) for specific facts and direct quotations. The paper (required) is due on \_\_\_\_ (see syllabus). The rewrite (optional) is due on \_\_\_\_ (see syllabus). It may enable you to raise your original grade by one letter (from a B- to an A- for example) or to a B-, whichever is higher. Please see me if you need assistance or wish to do a rewrite. Failure to submit the final paper will result in an “F” for the course.

*Late papers will receive substantial penalties (one full letter grade per day). If you need an extension, please contact me in advance – not the day the assignment is due. Any act of plagiarism (see the OWU Catalog and The History Handbook) will lead to an “F” for the assignment and a report to the dean of academic affairs, with additional penalties possible.*

### **Grading:**

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|-----------------------|------------|
| • Class participation | 50 percent |
| • Reading essays      | 25 percent |
| • Final paper         | 25 percent |

*Regular attendance is required. More than two excused absences will lead to a reduction of at least one letter in the class participation grade. Any unexcused absences will result in an “F” for the class participation grade, which also includes the discussion outline, facilitator questions, and reading worksheets. Significant improvement will receive appropriate recognition. Students should plan to demonstrate a sense of responsibility by using the restroom in advance and arriving on time – lateness is disruptive and disrespectful. Please turn off cell phones and refrain from texting or eating during class.*

**Topics and Assignments** (due that day unless otherwise announced):

**Week One (August 24-28): Course Introduction**

- M: Course Overview  
W: Lecture: *The Road to War*  
Reading: Major Problems, chapter 1 (docs #1-5)

**Week Two (August 31-September 4): The Origins of World War II**

- M: Discussion: Major Problems, chapters 1, 8  
W: Lecture: *“Why We Fight”*: *Propaganda and the Public*  
Reading: Major Problems, chapter 2 (doc #4)

**Week Three (September 7-11): The War at Home (I): Mobilization and Internment**

- M: Discussion: Blum, V Was for Victory, chapters 1, 3-5; Major Problems, chapter 2  
W: Lecture: *The War at Home*  
Reading: Major Problems, chapter 6 (docs #1-2) and chapter 7 (docs #1-2, 5-6)

**Week Four (September 14-18): The War at Home (II): Race, Gender, and Politics**

- M: Discussion: Blum, V Was for Victory, chapters 6-8; Major Problems, chapters 6, 7  
W: Lecture: *The Grand Alliance*  
Reading: Major Problems, chapter 10

**Week Five (September 21-25): The Diplomatic Front**

- M: Discussion: Doenecke and Stoler, Debating the Foreign Policies of FDR, 1933-1945  
W: Lecture: *The War Against Germany*  
Reading: Major Problems, chapter 4 (docs #1-4)

**Week Six (September 28-October 2): The War Against Germany (I)**

- M: Video: “Breaking Point” (episode seven from “Band of Brothers”)  
W: Discussion: Major Problems, chapters 3, 4

**Week Seven (October 5-9): The War Against Germany (II)**

- M: Video: “Saving Private Ryan” (opening and closing scenes)  
Reading: “Celluloid Soldiers” and “All Guts No Glory” (Blackboard)  
W: Discussion: Ambrose, Band of Brothers

**Week Eight (October 12-16): The War Against Japan (I)**

- M: Lecture: *The War Against Japan*

Reading: Major Problems, chapter 5 (docs #1-4)  
W: **No Class** (University Holiday)

Week Nine (October 19-23): **The War Against Germany (III)**

M: Discussion: Childers, Wings of Morning  
W: Discussion: Major Problems, chapter 5

Week Ten (October 26-30): **The War Against Japan (II)**

M: Discussion: Sledge, With the Old Breed  
W: Lecture: *The Atomic Age: Hiroshima and Nagasaki*  
Reading: Major Problems, chapter 11

Week Eleven (November 2-6): **The Atomic Age**

M: Discussion: Hersey, Hiroshima  
W: Lecture: *The U.S. and the Holocaust*  
Reading: Major Problems, chapter 9

Week Twelve (November 9-13): **The Holocaust**

M: Discussion: Wiesel, Night  
W: Video: “The Final Solution”  
Reading: “Wiesel’s Speech” (Blackboard)

Week Thirteen (November 16-20): **The Japanese Perspective**

M: Video: “Letters from Iwo Jima”  
Due: **Final Papers**  
W: Video: “Letters from Iwo Jima”

Week Fourteen (November 23-27): **University Holiday**

Week Fifteen (November 30-December 4): **Individual Conferences**

Week Sixteen (December 7-11): **Legacies of the “Good War”**

M: Discussion: Blum, V Was For Victory, chapter 9 and epilogue; Major Problems, chapter 12  
W: Discussion: “Greatest Generation” (Blackboard); course evaluation (handout)  
Due: **Optional Rewrites**

## GRADING RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

### The “A” Category:

1. **Thesis:** Answers the question clearly with some creativity and/or originality.
2. **Structure:** Has strong transitions and topic sentences that always relate directly to the thesis.
3. **Evidence:** Includes appropriate and persuasive examples at all points.
4. **Analysis:** Always relates evidence directly to the thesis or topic sentence.
5. **Logic:** Presents a strong and balanced argument that refutes opposing viewpoints.
6. **Style:** Contains correct grammar, punctuation, and citation; has appropriate sentence variety and almost no errors.

### The “B” Category:

1. **Thesis:** Answers the question clearly.
2. **Structure:** Has good transitions and topic sentences that usually relate directly to the thesis.
3. **Evidence:** Includes appropriate and persuasive examples at most points.
4. **Analysis:** Often relates evidence directly to the thesis or topic sentence.
5. **Logic:** Presents a good and balanced argument that addresses opposing viewpoints.
6. **Style:** Contains correct grammar, punctuation, and citation; lacks sentence variety and has minor errors.

### The “C” Category:

1. **Thesis:** Answers the question somewhat clearly.
2. **Structure:** Has adequate transitions and topic sentences that sometimes relate to the thesis.
3. **Evidence:** Includes appropriate and persuasive examples at some points.
4. **Analysis:** Sometimes relates evidence directly to the thesis or topic sentence.
5. **Logic:** Presents a coherent but unbalanced argument.
6. **Style:** Contains either numerous minor errors or several major errors in grammar, punctuation, and citation.

### The “D” Category:

1. **Thesis:** Fails to answer the question clearly.
2. **Structure:** Has weak transitions and few topic sentences that relate directly to the thesis.
3. **Evidence:** Includes few appropriate or persuasive examples.
4. **Analysis:** Rarely relates evidence directly to the thesis or topic sentence.
5. **Logic:** Presents an incoherent and unbalanced argument.
6. **Style:** Contains major and frequent errors in grammar, punctuation, and citation.

### The “F” Category

The paper reflects minimal effort and/or minimal comprehension of the assignment.