

A History of World War II

Prof. Stefan Ihrig

Office hours by appointment

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Wednesdays, 12.00-16.00

Room 225, Hatter Student Building

This course will offer an in-depth look at World War II and how it played out in Europe. It will combine military history with political and social aspects of the war. The course seeks to offer a comprehensive picture of a conflict that claimed the lives of tens of millions of peoples. It will do so by analyzing different perceptions, levels, and layers of the conflict. The course will also touch upon questions of remembrance, justice, and portrayals in popular culture. Furthermore, by including recently discovered footage and other sources from the time, it is hoped that this course will challenge existing trends that put this conflict into a very distant and removed past.

Reading assignments

Since this is a double seminar, meeting only once per week, extensive reading is required. Sometimes the assigned texts will be split across the group in order to manage the reading load and to stimulate debate. Reading the core texts for each week is an essential component of the seminar (requirements), as is active participation which will, at a minimum, involve discussion of the assigned reading and sometimes presenting to the group one of the assigned texts in very short form as well as thoughts and criticisms regarding these texts.

Texts will be generally available on the course's moodle platform as pdfs.

Writing assignments and grading/credit options

Each student has to complete two core assignments for the basic grading option: 1) to give a **short presentation** on a topic as chosen/assigned in first two weeks; 2) to write a **short essay** (8-10 pages) on *why the Allies won the war*. The student is expected to draw in this essay on the debates during the class as well as her/his reading of the texts for the class. It is something like an ongoing assignment, something like the student's research "diary" of the course. Not much additional reading and work should be necessary, but may be required and is welcome. The essay is to be handed in in the last week of the course, on 16 January 2018.

Depending on the chosen format (by the student) and depending on the credit points needed by the student, there are **three grading options**: 1. the grade given for the basic requirements (presentation and essay); or, in addition to the two core assignments: 2. a second, short final paper ("Referat"; about 10 pages; using secondary sources; deadline for submission is the beginning of semester bet; or, 3. a seminar paper (about 25-30 pages; using primary materials;

topic and outline subject to discussion and approval in the course of the seminar; deadline for submission of seminar papers: the beginning of semester bet). Active participation is essential in any case.

Presentation topics will be assigned at the beginning of the course. The essay question is set for all students (Why did the Allies win the war). For the grading options beyond the basic one, it is the students' responsibility to choose her/his topics in agreement with the course convener. It is also the students' responsibility to inform the course convener about which grading option they wish to pursue. All papers are to be handed in as printouts (please pay close attention to formatting, spelling, consistency in footnotes, citations, and bibliography). Papers which are not handed in during the course need to put into my mailbox in the Department of General History, Eshkol Tower, floor 13.

*** essential reading**

(to be read in total)

Norman Stone, *World War II – A Short History* (London: Penguin, 2014)

Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London: Pimlico, 2006 [1995])

**** further key texts**

Richard Overy, *Russia's War, 1941-1945* (London: Penguin, 2010 [1997])

Antony Beevor, *The Second World War* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2012)

Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms – A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

***** further suggested reading**

Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad* (London: Penguin, 2017 [1998])

Antony Beevor, *Arnhem – The Battle for the Bridges* (London: Viking, 2018)

Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2008)

Ian Kershaw, *Fateful Choices – Ten Decisions that Changed the World, 1940-1941* (London: Penguin, 2008)

Soenke Neitzel & Harald Welzer, *Soldaten on Fighting, Killing and Dying – The Secret Second World War Tapes of German POWs* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012)

Nicolas Stargard, *The German War – A Nation Under Arms, 1939-45* (London: Vintage, 2015)

Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction – The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin, 2007)

Course outline: A History of World War II

Week 1, 17 October 2018: **Introduction** (14.00-16.00)

Week 2, 24 October 2018: **Hitler's world (view) and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939**
Stone, *World War II*, ch. 1; Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, ch. 7/1 (612-637)

Week 3, 31 October 2018: **Revisionism and appeasement**
Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, ch. 7/2-4 (638-712)

Week 4, 7 November 2018: **A new partition of Poland and the war in the West**
Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, ch. 2; Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, ch. 1/1, 2/1, 2/2

Week 5, 14 November 2018: **Barbarossa**
Overy, *Russia's War*, ch. 3

Week 6, 21 November 2018: **Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad**
Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, ch. 3; Overy, *Russia's War*, ch. 4

Week 7, 28 November 2018: **Einsatzgruppen, SS, and Wehrmacht**
Neitzel & Welzer, *Soldaten*, ch. 4 & 11

Week 8, 5 December 2018: **Homefront and bombing war**
Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, ch. 4;

Week 9, 12 December 2018: **The economies of war & alliances**
Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, ch. 2, ch. 6, ch. 8; Weinberg, *World at Arms*, ch. 7

Week 10, 19 December 2018: **Reversal I**
Overy, *Russia's War*, ch. 7 & 8

Week 11, 26 December 2018: reading week (to be confirmed)

Week 12, 2 January 2018: **Reversal II**
reading to be announced

Week 13, 9 January 2018: **Ending the War**
reading to be announced

Week 14, 16 January: **Conclusion: How to understand and portray the war?**
Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, ch. 10