

**History 249: The Second World War in Europe  
Spring 2021  
Online**

Dr. Brian Mueller  
bsm@uwm.edu

Office Hours: Virtual

Teaching Assistant:  
Bailey Green

green89@uwm.edu

**Course Description**

British writer H.G. Wells wrote in 1914 that World War I “aims at a settlement that shall stop this sort of thing for ever.” He went on to describe the conflict as “the last war!” Yet, just over twenty years later, Europe again found itself embroiled in a war. This one, moreover, would prove far deadlier and destructive than its predecessor. What happened in this brief interval that led humankind to repeat the sins of their forefathers? To explain World War II, it is necessary to look at the ideological, economic, political, social, and cultural roots of the war. In the process, this course will explore how high-level officials, soldiers on the battlefield, and civilians experienced the war. This “total war” had a profound impact on Europe’s physical environment as well as on innocent men, women, and children, including, though not limited to, the Holocaust, medical experimentation, and forced migrations. Finally, just as World War I led directly to World War II, this course examines the ways in which the latter conflict produced the conditions necessary for the Cold War.

**Course Structure & Requirements**

- 1.) **Discussion Posts: 15%**
- 2.) **Reading Responses: 15%**
- 3.) **Quizzes: 25%**
- 4.) **Essay Exams: Midterm Exam: 20% / Final Exam: 25%**

**Grading Scale**

93-100 = A    90-92 = A-    89-87 = B+    86-83 = B    82-80 = B-    79-77 = C+  
76-73 = C    72-70 = C-    69-67 = D+    66-63 = D    63-60 = D-    60 > = F

## **Reading Responses**

You will be required to complete **TWO** reading responses throughout the semester. Each response should be about 750 words, or 2 to 3 pages, excluding footnotes. Your response should include three components. First, you should summarize the key arguments in each week's readings and illustrate how the various sources speak to one another (for instance, you might discuss how they offer an opposing position or provide additional information on a historical person or event). Second, you should analyze how the week's readings contribute to the materials presented in lecture on the same topic. Third, you should offer a critical assessment of the week's readings: What was most persuasive? What was least persuasive?

You do not need to include an introductory or concluding paragraph. However, you should begin your essay with a 1-2 sentence thesis statement. Your thesis should aim to show how the readings are related to one another by highlighting either their agreement or disagreement on the particular historical subject under investigation in the readings.

All work must be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font; have one-inch margins on each side; and include page numbers. All sources must be cited using the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for footnotes.

## **Discussion Post Requirements**

You will be required to complete **FIVE** sets of discussion posts throughout the semester. To access the discussion forums, go to the Canvas course site, and then select the "Discussions" module. The current week's discussion questions will be available under "Pinned Discussions." Before participating in the discussions, I strongly encourage you to read the "Discussion Post Grading Rubric & Guide," which you can reach by selecting "Modules" on the Canvas course site and looking under the Course Materials module.

The discussion forums are designed to prepare you for the type of thinking and analysis required on the primary source analyses and essay exams. You will be asked to respond both to specific questions about the documents and to your classmates' responses. To receive full credit, your posts must meet several requirements.

During the weeks when discussions occur, you are required to submit **TWO** posts. Each post should contain a minimum of 100 words but no more than 200 words. The first post will be an answer to one question, out of several that I post for the week. All the questions must be answered before another student can post an answer to the same question. When all the questions have been answered by at least one student, it is possible to offer another answer to the same question, though you will need to focus on an aspect not covered in the original answer. Some questions have multiple parts, so this should allow you to provide a unique answer. The second post will be a response to another student's answer to a different question from a different primary source, when applicable. Each post is worth 5 points.

## **Discussion Post Deadlines:**

**1st Post: Wednesday @ 11:59 pm**

**2nd Post: Friday @ 11:59 pm**

## Guidelines

1. As in the essay exams, the posts involve more than merely regurgitating information. You still need to know who, what, where, and when about the historical events discussed in the documents, but you must also compose an argument using specific details from the documents. Therefore, it is likely that students will disagree over the answers to particular questions (This is why I require students to write one post as a response), which is fine, so long as you provide evidence from the documents to defend your analysis. In other words, do not simply write “I agree completely” or “I like your post” or “Yes” or “No,” with a vague and general reference to the document. At the same time, do not rely entirely on direct quotes. You are allowed no more than one sentence of direct quotes. Put the arguments of the document in your own words by paraphrasing what is written.
2. Credit will not be given for late posts. Issues with your computer or internet connection are not valid excuses for failing to submit a post. Incomplete sentences will result in a substantially reduced grade. Quotations from sources other than the required primary documents are not allowed. Basic writing conventions apply to the posts. Frequent misspellings, lack of punctuation, and other writing errors will result in a reduced grade for the posts.
3. Even though you are required to make a discussion post only for two of the documents assigned for any given week, you must read every document on the syllabus in preparation for the essay exams. Doing well on the exams requires a clear understanding of how the documents “talk” to one another, or how they are linked thematically.

## Quizzes

You will be required to complete **SIX** ten-question quizzes based on the weekly lectures posted on YouTube. The quizzes will include a mix of multiple choice and True-False questions. The quizzes will be opened for students to complete **FIVE** days prior to the deadline. Once begun, you will have 30 minutes to complete the quiz. Questions on each quiz are randomly selected from a bank of 50+ questions. These quizzes are automatically graded. For security reasons, and out of fairness to all students, quiz answers will not be provided to students following completion of the quizzes. Issues with your computer or internet connection are not valid excuses for failing to submit a quiz. The lowest quiz grade of the semester is dropped. NOTE: It is recommended that you complete and take notes on the readings prior to taking the quiz.

## **Exams (Midterm: March 19 / Final: May 18 (11:59 pm deadline))**

There will be two essay exams. These exams are not cumulative. These exams are based entirely on the primary source documents. Answering the question, which will be given to you one week in advance, will require you to do the work of a historian. You must look through the wide-ranging set of primary source documents available to you in this course and formulate an answer using this evidence. In short, these exams will require you to *think*, as opposed to simply regurgitating historical facts, by analyzing the primary source documents and looking at the ways in which they interact with one another and makes it possible to develop a cogent argument to answer the exam question.

## **A Note on Sources**

Successful completion of the coursework requires an understanding of the differences between primary and secondary sources. Every reading in this course is a primary source.

### **Primary Sources**

The majority of books written by historians rely on these types of sources, which serve as evidence for a particular argument advanced by a historian. Historians interpret and evaluate these sources, which, on a much smaller scale, you will be doing with your discussion posts and on the essay exams. Primary sources are documents and artifacts created during the time under investigation by persons alive when the event occurred. Primary documents provide first-hand testimony and contemporary accounts of these moments in history.

### **Secondary Sources**

These are historians' interpretations and analyses of various primary sources. Secondary sources also include discussion of other secondary sources, but mainly to challenge, affirm, or correct them by adding new information, using previously undiscovered or unused primary documents, or offering new perspectives (This is why, for instance, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of books on George Washington and myriad other historical figures and events.). These sources often provide background information (Who, What, Where, and When).

### **Course Lectures**

By Sunday of each week, I will post abridged lectures on YouTube. The lectures will provide you with the historical background needed to interpret and understand the primary source documents that we will be analyzing in class. The links to these videos are available under the "Modules" tab on Canvas.

### **Course Readings**

All readings are available on Canvas. The links to these readings are available under the "Modules" tab on Canvas.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines indicated in the syllabus and on Canvas are Central Time (CST). Late work will generally not be accepted, though exceptions may be made due to the ongoing COVID outbreak.

## Course Outline

### **Week of January 25: Introduction**

**\*\*\*Complete Quiz #1 by Friday, January 29 at 11:59 pm\*\*\***

- Course Syllabus

### **Week of February 1: World War I: The Failed Peace**

**\*\*\*Complete 1<sup>st</sup> Set of Discussion Posts\*\*\***

- German Military Leaders on Defeat (1918-1919)
- German Delegation Responds to Treaty of Versailles (1919)
- Georges Clemenceau's Letter of Reply to the Objections of the German Peace Delegation (1919)
- General Erich Ludendorff, "On Overcoming the Consequences of the Lost War" (1922)
- Gustav Stresemann, "The Treaty of Locarno" (1924) (Canvas)

### **Week of February 8: Out of the Ashes: The Rise of Fascism in Italy & Germany**

**\*\*\*Complete Quiz #2 by Friday, February 12 at 11:59 pm\*\*\***

- Program of the National Fascist Party (1921)
- Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism" (1932)
- Mussolini's March on Rome Speech (1922)
- NSDAP Program (1920)
- Hitler's Speech at Putsch Trial (1924)
- Hitler Proclamation of October 14, 1933

### **Week of February 15: Mobilizing for Total War (Response #1)**

- Ben H. Shepherd, "The Army in the New Reich, 1933-36"
- Adrian Gilbert, *Waffen-SS: Hitler's Army at War*

### **Week of February 22: Building a Fascist Empire: Nazi Aggression & Appeasement**

**\*\*\*Complete 2<sup>nd</sup> Set of Discussion Posts\*\*\***

- Fascism as a Universal Phenomenon (1934)
- Benito Mussolini, "A Call to Arms" (1935)
- Italy's Expansion & the League of Nations (1935)
- Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1924)
- British Response to Germany's Takeover of the Rhine (1936)
- The Hossbach Memorandum (1937)
- Neville Chamberlain & Winston Churchill on the Munich Agreement (1938)

## **Week of March 1: Europe Goes to War: From Poland to the Fall of France**

**\*\*\*Complete 3<sup>rd</sup> Set of Discussion Posts\*\*\***

- Hitler “Operation White” Directive (1939)
- Polish Government Responds to German Actions (1939)
- British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Speech (1939)
- Hitler to Churchill Communication (1939)
- German Reply to British Ultimatum (1939)
- British Cabinet Meeting on German Invasion of Denmark & Norway (1940)
- British Strategy in a Certain Eventuality (1940)
- French-German Armistice Agreement (1940)

## **Week of March 8: A Two Front War: From the Battle of Britain to Operation Barbarossa**

**\*\*\*Complete Quiz #3 by Friday, March 12 at 11:59 pm\*\*\***

- Winston Churchill’s “The Few” Speech (1940)
- British War Cabinet Future Strategy (1940)
- Winston Churchill to Franklin Roosevelt Letter (1940)
- Stalin’s Speech at 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party (1939)
- Molotov on the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact (1939)
- Germany Strikes East (1941)
- Hitler Explains Soviet Invasion to Mussolini (1941)
- Hitler’s Obstinace (1941)

## **Week of March 15: Midterm Exam**

**\*\*\*Midterm Exam Due Friday, March 19 at 11:59 p.m.\*\*\***

## **Week of March 22: Spring Break**

## **Week of March 29: A War for the Seas (Response #2)**

- Craig L. Symonds, “The War on Trade”
- Evan Mawdsley, “The Battle of the Atlantic, Round Three, January 1943-May 1944”

## **Week of April 5: The Beginning of the End? The Allied Onslaught**

**\*\*\*Complete Quiz #4 by Friday, April 9 at 11:59 pm\*\*\***

- German Declaration of War Against the U.S. (1941)
- Stalin’s Order No. 227 (1942)
- A Soviet General on Stalingrad (1943)
- Marshal Zhukov on Nazi Debacle at Stalingrad
- “Nation, Rise Up, and Let the Storm Break Loose” (1943)
- A Conservative German Reacts to Goebbels Appeal (1943)
- Reactions to Goebbels’s Speech (1943)

**Week of April 12: A War of Fronts: North Africa, Italy, & Normandy**  
**\*\*\*Complete 4<sup>th</sup> Set of Discussion Posts\*\*\***

- Germany-First or Japan-First? (1942)
- Churchill to Stalin Letter (1942)
- Churchill & Roosevelt to Stalin Letter (1943)
- Joint Declarations of the Moscow Conference (1943)
- Churchill-Stalin Correspondence on Second Front (1942-1943)
- Churchill to Roosevelt Letter (1944)
- Hitler's Directive No. 51 (1944)
- German General Erwin Rommel Message to Hitler (1944)

**Week of April 19: War is Hell: Atrocities in Total War**  
**\*\*\*Complete Quiz #5 by Friday, April 23 at 11:59 pm\*\*\***

- British Lord Trenchard Supports Air Warfare (1942)
- Over-all Effects of the Air Offensive (1945)
- The Morale Effects of the Air Raids (1945)
- Instructions to Einsatzgruppen (1939)
- "The Criminal Orders" (1941)
- Molotov Notes on German Atrocities (1942)
- Stalin's Order for Katyn Massacre (1940)
- Marie Neumann, "We're in the Hands of a Mob" (1948)

**Week of April 26: The March to Berlin & the Fall of the Third Reich**

- Hitler's Meeting with Military Leaders (1944)
- Hitler's Order of March 19 & a Response (1945)
- Churchill-Roosevelt Correspondence (1945)
- General Eisenhower to General Marshall (1945)
- Roosevelt-Stalin Correspondence (1945)
- Hitler & Goebbels Conversation (1945)
- Private & Political Testaments of Hitler (1945)

**Week of May 3: Building the World Anew**  
**\*\*\*Complete 5<sup>th</sup> Set of Discussion Posts\*\*\***

- Atlantic Charter (1941)
- "The Four Policemen" (1943)
- Allies Discuss War Crimes Trials (1945)
- Jackson Opening Remarks at Nuremberg Trials (1945)
- Shawcross Opening Remarks at Nuremberg Trials (1945)
- German Response to Nuremberg Trials (1948)
- Nazis to the Bitter End? (1946)
- British & U.S. Officials Discuss Stalin's Territorial Demands (1942)
- Churchill-Stalin-Roosevelt Correspondence on Poland (1944)
- Notes on Meeting at Yalta Between the Big Three (1945)
- The German Problem (1945)

## **Week of May 10: Semester Wrap-Up**

**\*\*\*Complete Quiz #6 by Friday, May 14 at 11:59 pm\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Final Essay Exam Due Tuesday, May 18 at 11:59 pm\*\*\***

Students with disabilities. If you have a disability and need special assistance or accommodations, please see me within the first week of class. All student requests for accommodation must be made through the Accessibility Resource Center. Faculty may not grant disability accommodations without a written request. Information on accommodations can be found at <http://www4.uwm.edu/arc>.

As per UWS 17 of the University of Wisconsin Colleges Student Rights & Regulations, no form of harassment or discrimination is allowed in this class on the basis of identity, including but not limited to race, gender, class, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, immigration status, veteran status, gender identity, nationality, and/or ethnicity. While this class seeks to foster an environment in which ideas and beliefs can be challenged in the spirit of academic inquiry, such challenges must be respectful and civil so that all class members are welcome and empowered to participate in this learning process. For information on discriminatory conduct, please visit the website at [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S\\_47\\_Discrimina\\_duct\\_Policy.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf)

Academic misconduct. Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. Information on academic misconduct can be found at <http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/>. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with it. If a student violates this policy in any way, I reserve the right to impose a sanction of failure on the assignment/assessment or failure in the course. If you have questions about appropriate citations, please ask.

The following link contains important additional information on the UWM course policies listed above and others: <http://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.pdf>

The instructor and the University reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as the curriculum and/or program require(s).

### **Academic Advising in History**

All L&S students have to declare and complete an academic major to graduate. If you have not yet declared a major, you are encouraged to do so, even if you are at an early stage in your college education. If you are interested in declaring a major (or minor) in History, or if you need academic advising in History, please visit the Department of History undergraduate program web page at <http://www4.uwm.edu/letsce/history/undergrad/> for information on how to proceed.