

AMH 3931

The United States and World War Two

Instructor: Dr. Joseph Spillane

Classroom: Keene-Flint

Class Meeting Times: Tuesday, 7th period (1:55-2:45) and Thursday, 7th-8th periods (1:55-3:50)

Office Hours: Thursdays 9:00 to noon, and by appointment

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About this Course

World War Two was perhaps the most transformative event in the global history of the twentieth century. Rooted in conflicts over empire and the disruptions of the post-Great War period and the Great Depression, this conflict fundamentally shaped the world order for decades to come. The remarkable impacts were certainly felt in the United States, and in this course, we'll explore the American experience of WWII. We will follow the story from the great debates over American involvement in rapidly growing global conflict in the 1930s, to the longer-term political conversations about the future of democracy and America's role in a postwar world. We will examine some of the most consequential decision-making of the war, from the strategic visions for the Pacific and European theaters of war, managing alliances, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb in 1945. We will take a close look at how the United States mobilized its citizens and its economy in unprecedented ways. And, finally, we will consider the experience of wartime, from that of soldiers to the citizen on the home front.

This course aims to be comprehensive, but of necessity we will leave some things out—there's no way to cover every aspect of the American experience, but we will be working through the conceptual building blocks with which all aspects of wartime experience can be studied. We will certainly have lectures that cover big parts of this story, but this is also intended to be a very participatory class. Almost every week, we will tackle some critical “historical puzzles” in class. So be prepared to regularly attend class and actively engage in the work!

Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Distinguish between different types of historical sources, take effective notes on any given source, and evaluate their utility for historical research.
- Explain how scholars develop and answer effective historical research questions.
- Investigate the historiographical debates surrounding specific research topics in the history of World War Two
- NOTE! Students who complete this course will also finish having learned a great deal about the role of the United States in World War Two, and the impacts of the wartime experience on United States history.

Readings

The following texts absolutely must be purchased. Each will be featured on one of the three exams for the course.

Robert L. Allen, *The Port Chicago Mutiny: The Story of the Largest Mass Mutiny Trial in U.S. Naval History* (Heyday Books, 1993).

Michael Neiberg, *Potsdam: The End of World War II and the Remaking of Europe* (Basic Books, 2015). **Available as an e-book through the UF Libraries**

Mary Louise Roberts, *Sheer Misery: Soldiers in Battle in WWII* (University of Chicago Press, 2021).

James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford University Press, 2011). **Available as an e-book through the UF Libraries**

The remainder of the readings for the course are available electronically through the University of Florida Library, or online generally, and links to those readings will be available in Canvas for each week of the course. Please make sure you are engaging with the reading; that is key to what we are doing in the classroom and to your assignments.

Assignments

Everything we do for this course will be done in class. There are no exams. Do not be fooled, though, you will have to be present and engaged to do well in the course. And two thirds of the course grade will be the work you do for class on four group challenges. Details on each of these will be provided at the start of each of the four parts of the course. The course assignments and grading are organized in the following way:

Class Participation/Excavating History—100 Points

Group Challenge One: War, Popular Opinion, and Conspiracy—50 Points

Group Challenge Two: Sheer Misery and the Battle of the Bulge—50 Points

Group Challenge Three: The Port Chicago Trial—50 Points

Group Challenge Four: Potsdam and the Origins of the Cold War—50 points

TOTAL POINTS: 300

Grading Scale

94-100%—A

90-93—A-minus

87-89—B-plus

84-86—B

80-83—B-minus

77-79—C-plus

74-76—C

70-73—C-minus

67-69—D-plus

64-66—D

60-63—D-minus

59 or below—E

Late Work and Make Up Work

No make-up assignments will be given except in cases of an excused absence as defined by UF's attendance policy –

(<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) or a documented emergency. Notification of an excused absence should be made **BEFORE** to the assignment's deadline and not days later. For an emergency, instructor notification should be made within 72 hours post-emergency event and not weeks later. Students should be prepared to document the reasons for the absence. Students whose absences are not excused will not normally be allowed to make up assignments.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is strictly prohibited. *Dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism.* Cheating encompasses acts such as, but not limited to, collaborating with other students on the class assignments when not directed or collaborating with others or unauthorized materials during an exam.

Plagiarism involves acts such as, but not limited to, failing to cite sources properly in written work, using phrases taken from original sources without proper quotations and citations, submitting all or part of papers that have been submitted to another class either in the past or during this current semester, and attempting to pass off someone else's ideas as your own. *Plagiarism can occur in the absence of intent*; it is your responsibility to make sure that you do not copy words or ideas from anyone, or generated by anybody (or anything) besides yourself, either purposefully or inadvertently. Cheating or plagiarism will result in penalties. It might be a zero on the assignment, an E in the class, or other disciplinary action. I may also elect to report academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students Office.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code

(<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic

misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult me.

Extra Credit

This is a commonly asked question, so please know that I will under no circumstances provide a student with an individualized extra-credit assignment. I also do not use “incompletes” except in the event of genuine problems (usually occurring after the withdrawal deadline) that are valid excuses for being unable to finish coursework on time. Your grade in the class is based on your performance on the assignments and final paper. Please do not come to me at the end of the semester asking for “extra” points. It is your responsibility to check Canvas regularly and to always know your current grade.

Disability Access

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students are required to meet with the instructor to discuss the appropriate accommodations required for the class. Just simply emailing the instructor your accommodation letter with no further discussion will not suffice. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. Additionally, if you were to experience an event during the semester that may require class accommodations, please reach out to the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible and provide me the documentation immediately following your visit, so that you are not delayed in receiving class accommodations.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> . Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from

GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/> . Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/> .

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note that more information for each week, including details on assignments and due dates, can be found on the course's Canvas page.

PART ONE: FEAR ITSELF

Week 1 (January 13 and 15) – America and the Politics of Global Crisis

Subject: What were the competing historical positions on the question of neutrality and American involvement in the European conflict?

Readings:

- Charles Warren, "Troubles of a Neutral," *Foreign Affairs* 12 (1934).
- Allen W. Dulles, "The Cost of Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 12 (1934).

Week 2 (January 20 and 22) – Can Democracy Survive? To What End?

Subject: How "real" was the concern over the death of democracy prior to Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war? How were these concerns reflected, or not, in Franklin Roosevelt's "Arsenal of Democracy" speech on December 29, 1940? We will also discuss historian Samuel Zipp's article on Wendell Willkie's famous world tour of 1942, which becomes a lens for thinking about the different perspectives on America's role in the world.

Readings:

- Odette Keun, *A Foreigner Looks at the TVA* (New York: Longmans, 1937), 1-7. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015048497716&seq=18>
- Harold D. Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology* 46 (1941).

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, Radio Address, December 29, 1940.
<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-29-1940-fireside-chat-16-arsenal-democracy>
- Samuel Zipp, “Dilemmas of World-Wide Thinking: Popular Geographies and the Problem of Empire in Wendell Willkie’s Search for One World,” *Modern American History* 1 (2018): 295-319.

Week 3 (January 27 and 29)—War, The American State, and Popular Opinion

Group Challenge Number One—War, Popular Opinion, and Conspiracy. This week will be launch the first of our group challenges, this time centered around the federal government’s efforts to manage American popular opinion and, more specifically, the rampant rumors and conspiracy theories in circulation and, even more specifically, the rumors regarding “Eleanor Clubs”—you’ll receive much more information on the challenge in advance of this week.

Readings:

- James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State* (Part I, “Ideology, Political Culture, and State Formation” pages 19-112.

PART TWO: WAGING WAR

Week Four (February 3 and 5)—Defeat, Inaction, Mobilization: The U.S. Military from Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal and North Africa

Subject: What did the war look like, from a military perspective, in the wake of Pearl Harbor? Thrust into active military conflict in both Europe and the Pacific, the United States confronted the limitations on immediate action. We discuss the broad scope of military engagement through the invasion of North Africa in Operation Torch (November 1942) and start of Allied offensive operations in the Pacific in the Guadalcanal campaign. We will also consider the utility of oral history to illuminate some of these historical moments.

Readings:

- “Recollections of the Battle of Midway by LT Joseph P. Pollard, MC, USN,” Naval History and Heritage Command
<https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/library/oral-histories/wwii/battle-of-midway/a-doctor-remembers-the-battle-of-midway.html>
- Hanson W. Baldwin, “America at War: December 1942-May 1943,” *Foreign Affairs* 21, no. 4 (July 1943): 606-617.

Week 5 (February 10 and 12)—D-Day and War in the Pacific

Subject: We will, rather expeditiously, cover the later parts of the military campaigns in both the Pacific and in Europe. Our survey of the European theater focuses on the decisions for the Normandy landings, and our survey of the Pacific theater on the evolving strategic plan, with a focus on the Central Pacific Campaign and the final bitter battle for Okinawa.

Readings:

- General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Order of the Day, June 6, 1944 (we will also read an edited draft of the order).
- Okinawa documents, TBD

Week 6 (February 17 and 19)—Soldiers’ Stories

Group Challenge Two: *Sheer Misery* and the Battle of the Bulge. This week will be the launch of the second of our group challenges, this time centered around the physical experience of soldiering that Mary Louise Roberts details in her book *Sheer Misery* and, more specifically, on the problem of soldier’s feet and of trench foot.

Reading:

- Mary Louise Roberts, *Sheer Misery: Soldiers in Battle in WWII* (entire)

PART THREE—Fighting, At Home

Week 7 (February 24 and 26) – Work or Fight: Mobilizing Labor

Subject: For the United States, World War II was an exercise in mass mobilization. Mobilization of military personnel, of course. But also, as we have seen, a mobilization of popular opinion. James T. Sparrow, in *Warfare State*, describes other kinds of “mobilizations” such as the extraordinary mobilization of money. This week, however, we’ll start exploring the mobilization of labor at home. We’ll read the relevant chapter in *Warfare State*, and the opening of Katherine Archibald’s classic student *Wartime Shipyard*.

Reading:

- James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State* (Chapter Five, “Work or Fight” pages 160-200)
- Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), pages 1-39 (including the chapters, “The Shipyard” “The Problem in Disunity” and “Women in the Shipyard”). Available here: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001292472>
- Zelma Parker, “Strangers in Town,” *Survey Midmonthly* 79 (1943), 170-171.

Week 8 (March 3 and 5) – War and Rights: Double Victory

Subject: Wartime created new contexts for the assertions of rights in the United States, a story that can be told in many dimensions. This week, we’ll focus primarily on one dimension of war and social change, the African American civil rights movement.

Reading:

- A. Phillip Randolph, “A Call to March on Washington” (1941)
- Walter White and Thurgood Marshall, *What Caused the Detroit Riot: An Analysis* (1943)

Week 9 (March 10 and 12) – The Port Chicago Mutiny

Group Challenge Three: The Port Chicago Trial. This week marks the third of our group challenges, in which we will examine the 1944 mutiny trial in which 50 black sailors were charged and convicted for refusing to continue to load munitions in the wake of the deadly Port Chicago explosion, which killed more than 300.

Reading:

- Robert L. Allen, *The Port Chicago Mutiny: The Story of the Largest Mass Mutiny Trial in U.S. Naval History* (entire)

PART THREE: Outcomes and Reckonings

Week 10 (March 24 and 26) – War and Popular Culture: The Noir Era

Subject: How do historians use popular culture to produce commentaries on the state of American life? More specifically, this week, we will be looking at how historians of the modern United States think about World War II as a moment of cultural development and contestation.

Readings:

- Christine C. Kleinegger, "Moody Decade: The 1940s Revisited," *American Quarterly* 44 (March 1992): 129-135.
- Elizabeth R. Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *Western Historical Quarterly* 38 (2007): 133-156. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25443504?mag=pachuca-rebels-in-1940s-los-angeles&seq=8>

Week 11 (March 31 and April 2) – The Atomic Age

Subject: This week, we will review the development of the atomic bomb, and Harry Truman's decision to deploy this weapon against Japan.

Readings:

- Michael D. Gordin, "The Embrace of Atomic Bomb Orthodoxy and Revisionism," *Reviews in American History* 40 (September 2012), 500-505.
- Selected documents from "The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb," Harry S. Truman Library, National Archives.
<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/online-collections/decision-to-drop-atomic-bomb>

Week 12 (April 7 and 10) – The Occupation of Japan

Subject: In each of the last two weeks, we have examined some of the legacies and reckonings of the war for the United States—and, in each case, we've considered how historians debate these fundamental questions. This week, another reckoning, and another debate, over the postwar occupation of Japan.

Readings:

- Justin Williams, "American Democratization Policy for Occupied Japan: Correcting the Revisionist Version," *Pacific Historical Review* 57, no. 2 (1988), 179-202.
- John W. Dower, "A Rejoinder," *Pacific Historical Review* 57, no. 2 (1988), 202-209.

Week 13 (April 14 and 16) and Week 14 (April 21) – What to Do With Germany?

Potsdam and the Origins of the Cold War

Group Challenge Four: Potsdam and the Origins of the Cold War. In this last of the semester's group exercises, we will be traveling (historically, anyway) to Potsdam, Germany in the Summer of 1945. There, the last major wartime conference among the great powers took place. We'll organize ourselves to discuss just one of the critical questions confronting the participants—what to do about Germany?

Readings:

- Michael Neiberg, *Potsdam* (entire)