World War II America

Course Description:
This course will provide an introduction to the American experience in World War II. In addition to military history, students will also examine topics on the role of women and minorities in the armed forces and on the homefront, developments in domestic politics during the war years, and the impact that World War II had on American culture. In the course, students will look at a diverse range of historical evidence, including novels and films, in order to understand World War II from a variety of perspectives.

Required Texts:
Stephen E. Ambrose, Citizen Soldiers
Paul Fussell, Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War
John W. Jeffries, Wartime America: The World War II Homefront
George H. Roeder, The Censored War
Ronald Takaki, Double Victory: A Multicultural History of World War II
The professor will provide additional readings throughout the course.

Course Requirements:
Exams
Final Exam, pick up April 27 – 20% of final grade

Essays
First Essay on primary sources, February 16 – 15%
Second Essay on Ambrose/Fussell, April 20 – 25%

Shorter Assignments – 30%
There will be a series of shorter essays throughout the semester. In addition, students will debate the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima.

Class Participation
Active participation in class discussion – 10% of final grade. Students may also improve their participation grade by meeting with the professor during office hours or by appointment.

Course Policies:
Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three unexcused absences without penalty. Students are required to find out what they missed in class on the day of their absence. If students miss more than two classes, they are required to meet with the professor to discuss their absences. Failure to do so will result in the lowering of a
student’s final grade by one third grade point for every absence over two. Please consider this policy when planning for extracurricular activities (sports, mock trial, etc.) Due dates and times for writing assignments are fixed. All assignments are due in class, not in the professor’s mailbox. Assignments will be lowered one third grade point for each class that an assignment is late. Simply turn things in on time and you can avoid this elaborate system. Dates and times for exams are fixed. The professor supports the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate your commitment to the Code, each student must write “pledged” and sign his/her name on every assignment. If you have questions about plagiarism you should talk to me directly.

Course Calendar:

Thursday, January 6
Introduction

Tuesday, January 17, Thursday, January 19
Before the Day of Infamy:
The Origins of America’s Entry into World War II

Total War:
Mobilization and the Nation-State

(Jeffries, Ch. 1-3; Takaki, Ch 1-2)

Tuesday, January 24, Thursday, January 26
Assault on Fortress Europe:
The GI and the Coming of D-Day

(Ambrose, Prologue and Ch. 1-5)

Tuesday, January 31, Thursday, February 2
Changing America:
War and the Homefront

The Good War?:
Historians Assess World War II

(Jeffries, Ch. 3; Takaki, Ch. 6)

Tuesday, February 7, Thursday, February 9
“Taking it to them”:
G.I’s and Understanding the Enemy

Winning Hearts and Minds:
Propaganda and WWII
(Ambrose, Ch. 6-9; Roeder, all)

Tuesday, February 14, Thursday, February 16
Rosie the Riveter and GI Jane:
Women and WW II

(Jeffries, 93-106)
February 16: See film *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*
**First Essay on primary sources – due in class February 16**

Tuesday, February 21, Thursday, February 23
Life on the Frontlines:
Military Culture in WWII

“We’re all in this together”:
Diversity at home and abroad

(Ambrose, Ch. 10-15 [except 345-350]; Takaki, 4, 5, 8)

Tuesday, February 28, Thursday, March 2
Double Victory:
African Americans and World War II

(Jeffries, 107-119; Takaki, Ch. 3; Ambrose, 345-350)

Tuesday, March 7, Thursday, March 9
See film *Saving Private Ryan*

Tuesday, March 14, Thursday, March 16
Spring Break

Tuesday, March 21, Thursday, March 23
Winning the War:
American Military Success

Dr. New Deal becomes Dr. Win the War:
Politics and WWII

(Ambrose, 16-19; Jeffries, Ch. 7)

Tuesday, March 28, Thursday, March 30
Another View of Battle:
Fussell and Reinterpreting the Combat Experience

(Fussell, Ch. 1-14)
Tuesday, April 4, Thursday, April 6
No Easy Answers:
Hiroshima and Manzanar

(Takaki, Ch. 7; Handout on Hiroshima)
**April 4: Debate on Hiroshima**

Tuesday, April 11
Coming Home:
A Nation and its Veterans

(Jeffries, 8)

Thursday, April 13
Easter Break

Tuesday, April 18, Thursday, April 20
Fact, Myth, Legend:
Assessing WWII America

(Ambrose, epilogue; Jeffries, epilogue; Fussell, 15-18; Takaki, Ch. 9)
**Assignment on Ambrose/Fussell – Due April 20.**

Tuesday, April 25, Thursday, April 27
Final Thoughts
**Receive Take Home Final – Due date TBA**