

HIST 105 WWII America

Saxe - Section #13504, Buckman 220, 11-11:50 MWF

E-mail - saxer@rhodes.edu; Phone – 843-3249

Office Hours – MW 10-11 or by appointment, Buckman 207

World War II America – Writing Intensive Section

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 home front, 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. This class will also focus on the development of students' writing skills and will dedicate significant class time to discussions of effective composition.

Required Texts:

Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers*

John Morton Blum, *V was for Victory*

Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*

George Roeder, *The Censored War: American Visual Experience during World War II*

Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of World War II*

Course Requirements:

Essays

The hard copy of all essays should be typed, double-spaced, and have page numbers. Essays should be affixed with either a clip or staple. They should also have the following at the top of the first page: name, a meaningful title, date, and the word count. Ex:

George S. Montgomery

WWII: The Best Class Ever

October 1, 2012

680 words

Also, an email copy of your essay must be sent to the professor on the due date. The title of the document should be your last name and the number of the essay. Ex: "Montgomery2"

In addition, any use of sources must be cited using Chicago-style footnotes

(see http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html for help or you may ask the instructor). A title page and works cited page are not necessary. At the end of each essay, the Rhodes pledge should be printed and signed.

Failure to follow these guidelines will result in a penalty on the essay's grade.

Essay 1 – 5% of grade. Due September 7

Please go to the library and photocopy two advertisements for war bonds from 1942-1945. The advertisements may be just for war bonds or they may be ads for other products that also mention war bonds. While newspapers have ads, magazines like *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* have the best ones.

If you would like to avoid the library, please go

to: http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/dynaweb/adaccess/war/@Generic_CollectionView?DwebQuery=%27War--War+Bonds%27

This is a Duke University ad history website which has a database of over 200 war bond ads that you can print out. If you use this web site, please do not just select the first ones on the list or the selections a classmate has printed out. Look at several examples and pick the ones that you find most interesting. I want to see a variety of ads when we discuss this in class.

After completing your search, please write a 500-750 word essay analyzing the advertisements. What messages are they trying to send? How are they trying to appeal to their audience? What can we learn about the time from the ads?

Essay 2 – 25% of grade

The grade for this essay includes a rough draft submitted to the professor and a peer review. For this essay, students must find an oral history or memoir from an American in which the author or subject describes his or her experience during World War II. Students may also interview an American about his/her experience during WWII. Another good resource is the Library of Congress Veterans History Project (<http://www.loc.gov/vets/>), which contains many interviews online. Students will focus on two or three specific parts of the history or memoir that are the most interesting. After doing so, students will then have to look at periodical accounts (newspapers, magazines, etc.) from the World War II years that also describe the most interesting parts of the history or memoir. Students should try to use at least two different periodicals in the essay.

After reading both the first person account and the periodical account of the same events, students will compare and contrast the portrayals of these events. They must also answer the following question: **which are more reliable for historians – memoirs from participants in historical events or periodical accounts of the time?**

Students are encouraged to make appointment with the instructor to find sources, discuss ideas, etc.

The essay should be 1600-2000 words in length, double-spaced with normal font and margins.

Deadlines:

Rough draft to Saxe – September 12

Peer review – September 19

Final Draft to Saxe – September 26

Essay 3 – 5% of grade. Due October 5

In his 1992 article “The Good War,” historian Richard Polenberg asserts that popular perceptions of WWII do not understand home front developments as truly threatening “democratic values,” but instead popular notions reinforce a picture of a unified nation that came together to defeat fascism.

After viewing a 2000 ABC News/History Channel documentary on the American home front (which many historians feel reflects popular perceptions about American history), **is Polenberg’s assertion still accurate?**

In 500-1000 words, answer the previous question. Provide specific examples from Polenberg and the home front documentary to justify your conclusions.

If popular perceptions have changed about the war and democratic values, speculate on why this change has occurred. What are the implications of this change for our understanding of WWII?

If perceptions have **not** changed, why not? What has kept the popular perception of the war immune from the effects of histories like the ones detailed in Polenberg’s piece? Is this lack of change a bad thing?

Essay 4 – 5% of grade. Due October 31

Students will debate the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in class and write up their findings. The class will be broken up into two teams – one against the dropping of the bomb, the other justifying Truman’s decision. Teams are encouraged to use any information that will help them win the debate. Each student will then write up a 300-600 word essay on what they feel is the most important piece of evidence or argument that supports his/her team’s position. A portion of the grade for this essay will also reflect each student’s active participation in the debate.

Essay 5 – 10% of grade. Due November 12

Students will read reviews of *Saving Private Ryan*. Included are selections from historians (*The Journal of Military History*, *The Journal of American History*, and *The American Historical Review*), the mainstream media (*Time* and *The New York Times*), the political right (*The Washington Times*), and the political left (*The Progressive*). All offer their own interpretation of the film and its importance. In 1000-2000 words, summarize the various viewpoints found in the reviews and analyze why certain reviewers have such strong opinions about the film. In the end, decide which reviewer is most accurate in his/her assessment.

Essay 6 – 25% of grade. Due December 5

In this essay, students will compare and contrast Stephen Ambrose’s *Band of Brothers* and Paul Fussell’s *Wartime*. Students will discuss each author’s approach and evidence, and will then answer the question: **Which author provides the most accurate assessment of the American experience in World War II?**

In order to answer this question completely, students must deal with some of the themes and primary and secondary sources that have been provided throughout the class. Students should not limit their essay to just the military aspects of the war, but also discuss how Ambrose and

Fussell's work should be understood in the context of the entire American war experience, including what happened on the home front. In particular, themes relating to the "Good War" debate will be appropriate for this essay.

Students are encouraged to make appointments with the instructor to discuss ideas, look at rough drafts, etc.

The essay should be 1600-2000 words in length, double-spaced with normal font and margins.

Exams

Final Take Home Exam, pick up December 5 – 15% of final grade

Class Participation

Active participation in class discussion – 10% of final grade. Active participation in class discussion is the best way to achieve a good class participation grade. Class participation also includes good conduct. Failure to participate in class, neglecting to do the reading for the day, sleeping or leaving during class, playing games on your laptop or doing text messaging during class may all have a negative impact on your grade. During class time, all phones must be put out of sight. If you choose to use a laptop or tablet during class, you must sign a pledge that you will only use these devices for approved course work.

Course Policies:

Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three 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 three 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 three. Please consider this policy when planning for extracurricular activities (sports, mock trial, etc.).

Due dates and times for writing assignments and exams are fixed. Late assignments will receive a failing grade. All assignments must be turned in to the professor, even ones that are after the assignments' deadlines. Failure to complete an assignment will result in a failing grade for the class. If you have questions about plagiarism, please talk to me directly.

The professor supports the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate commitment to the Code, each student must write "pledged" and sign his/her name on every assignment.

Course Calendar:

Wednesday, August 22

Introduction

Friday, August 24

Before the Day of Infamy:

The Origins of America's Entry into World War II
(Takaki, Ch. 1-2)

August 27

The Good War?:

Historians Assess World War II

(Brokaw, selections from *The Greatest Generation*; Polenberg, “The Good War?”)

August 29

War and the Home Front

(Blum, Prologue, Ch. 1)

August 31

Willie and Joe

(Bill Mauldin cartoons)

September 4

Labor Day

September 5

The GI

(Blum, Ch. 2)

September 7

Band of Brothers I

(Ambrose, 1-107)

Essay 1 - due in class September 7

September 10

The War and the Economy

(Blum, Ch. 3, 4)

September 12

Catch-22

(Heller, selections *Catch-22*)

Essay 2, Rough draft – due to Saxe in class September 12

September 14

See film *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*

September 17

Rosie the Riveter and GI Jane:

Women and WW II

(Jeffries, selections from *Wartime America*; Meyer, selections from *Creating G.I. Jane*)

September 19

Band of Brothers II

(Ambrose, 108-194)

Essay 2, Peer Review – due in class September 19

September 21

The War and Sacrifice: Guest talk by Mark Leff
(Leff, “The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in WWII)

September 24

War and Information
(Roeder, all)

September 26

September 28: See ABC News/History Channel documentary, *This Century: The Home Front*
Essay 2, Final Draft – due in class September 26

September 28

Band of Brothers III
(Ambrose, 195-307)

October 1

Dr. Win-the-War: Politics and WWII
(Blum 7, 8)

October 3

“We’re all in this together”:
Diversity at home and abroad
(Takaki, Ch. 4, 5, 6, 8)

October 5

The Naked and the Dead
(Mailer, selections from *The Naked and the Dead*)
Essay 3 – due in class October 5

October 8

Double Victory I: African Americans and World War II
(Takaki, Ch. 3; Blum, Ch. 6)

October 10

Double Victory II
(Sklaroff, “Constructing G.I. Joe Louis”)

October 12

Double Victory III
(Saxe, selections from *Settling Down*)

October 15

Fall Break

October 17

Gays and WWII

(Berubé, selections from *Coming Out under Fire*)

October 19

Lesbians and WWII

(Meyer, selections from *Creating G.I. Jane*; Kennedy and Davis, selections from *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*)

October 22

Another View of Battle I: Fussell and Reinterpreting the Combat Experience

(Fussell, Preface, Ch. 1-6)

October 24

Another View of Battle II: Fussell and Reinterpreting the Combat Experience

(Fussell, Ch. 7-9)

October 26

Another View of Battle III: Fussell and Reinterpreting the Combat Experience

(Fussell, Ch. 10-14)

October 29

No Easy Answers: Hiroshima and Internment

(Blum, Ch. 5; Takaki, Ch. 7; “How to tell your friends from the Japs” handout; Handout on Hiroshima)

October 31

Debate on Hiroshima and Essay 4 – due in class October 31

November 2

History and the Bomb

(Boyer, “Whose History is it Anyway?”)

November 5, 7, 9

See film *Saving Private Ryan*

(Film reviews)

November 12

Discussion of Film Reviews

Essay 5 – due in class November 12

November 14

Victory

(Blum, Ch. 9)

November 16

See documentary *Let There Be Light*

November 19

Coming Home - The Veteran Returns
(Blum, Epilogue)

November 21, 23

Thanksgiving Break

November 26

Assessing WWII America: Legend?
(Ambrose, epilogue to *Citizen Soldiers*)

November 28

Assessing WWII America: Fact?
(Fussell, 15-18)

November 30

Assessing WWII America: History?
(Takaki, Ch. 9)

December 3, 5

Final Thoughts

Assignment on Ambrose/Fussell – Due December 5

Receive Take Home Final – December 5

Due Date - TBA