

History 244: Ivan and Fritz Go to War
The Nazi-Soviet Conflict on World War II's Eastern Front
Fall 2019: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 11:00-11:50

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Office hours: Tuesday 9-10,
Wednesday 10-10:50
(HSSC atrium),
Thursday 2-3

Course description

To many Americans, the most familiar images from World War II concern military exploits on the Western front, from D-Day to the Battle of the Bulge. In this class, however, we will focus on events from a less familiar but arguably more important side of the conflict: the struggle between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR. This course will include an overview of the main military events of the war, but it will focus on the conflict's larger political and social significance. How did Russian and German soldiers experience the war, and to what extent did they believe in the cause of the totalitarian state they were fighting for? What accounted for the unusual savagery of fighting in the east? What role did fighting on the Eastern front play in the development of the Holocaust? And how have memories and myths of the war shaped European history since 1945? We will examine questions like these by looking at primary and secondary texts on the bloody struggle for mastery of the Eastern front.

Course readings

The following books are all available for purchase at the college bookstore and are on course reserve at Burling Library:

Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City (A Diary)*
Richard Evans, *The Third Reich at War*
Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*
Jochen Hellbeck, *Stalingrad: The City that Defeated the Third Reich*
Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*

Other readings (marked "[Pioneerweb]" below) will be available on the course's Blackboard site.

Office Hours

I strongly encourage students to come talk to me during my office hours, so we can discuss course readings, assignments, the study of history, or related issues. This semester I will always be available to meet with students in my office (Mears 316) on Tuesdays from 9:00 to 10:00 and on Thursdays from 2:00 to 3:00. I will also be available to meet with students in the HSSC atrium from 10 to 10:50 on Wednesdays (between my two classes).

These are drop-in hours; you are welcome to come by without an appointment (and, in fact, I

will leave these hours free for drop-ins.) You are also welcome to email me to arrange a different time to meet. I will most likely cancel my regular office hours a couple weeks each semester (say, during registration week) and instead offer meetings by appointment only. I can always find time to meet with you!

Students are welcome to meet with me to discuss any questions they might have about this course, the study of history, or other academic issues at Grinnell. If you're having trouble with a written assignment, I particularly encourage you to come: If you get stuck writing a thesis statement or can't figure out what you want to say in a paper, it's often better to meet with someone about it than to try to just push yourself to get something done. I'm also happy to discuss course readings in more detail, to answer questions, to talk about the history major, or to discuss any academic questions that might concern you.

Learning Goals

This course has three broad objectives: to help students understand the history of World War II on the Eastern Front, to enable them to critically read both primary documents and secondary texts, and to teach them to improve their analytical writing skills. But it also has several more specific goals:

Historical Learning Goals

By the end of the semester, students who have completed this course will be able to:

- explain the main causes of World War II in the East and make a case for how the Soviet Union was able to win the war;
- explain why the war in the east was unusually violent and brutal and how genocide and everyday warfare in that conflict were related;
- explain how the dictatorial political regimes in Nazi Germany and the USSR shaped the experience of war for civilians and soldiers alike.

Critical Reading Goals

By the end of the course, students will have refined their ability to:

- interpret a primary source (historical document) by analyzing its structure, audience, goals, and biases;
- identify and critique the argument of a secondary text (a book or article by a present-day historian), while situating that text within a larger historical debate or literature.

Analytical Writing Goals

By the end of the semester, students will have improved their ability to:

- craft a clear, specific, and nuanced thesis statement in response to a historical question;
- construct a well-organized, evidence-rich, and cohesive paper in defense of a central argument;
- identify and analyze a base of source materials (secondary or primary) for a substantial research paper.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on the following requirements. Note that you must hand in every assignment listed below in order to pass the class, and that if your grades improve steadily over the course of the semester, I will take that into consideration in deciding your final grade.

A 3-page paper (10% of your total grade), due on Saturday, September 21, at 5:00 PM (by email). This paper will require you to synthesize material we've read for class; I will hand out an assignment sheet about 7 days before the paper is due.

A 5-page paper (15% of your grade), due on Friday, October 11, at 5:00 PM by email. This paper will also be based on our course readings.

A 10-page research paper (20%), due on Sunday, December 8, at 5:00 PM. This paper can either be a historiographical paper (centering on an issue in the secondary literature) or an analysis of a primary source (say, a memoir); in either case, you are free to choose a topic of interest to you (although you need to clear the topic with me).

A series of short assignments connected to the research paper (10%). As preparation for your 10-page paper, you will need to hand in a paper proposal, an expanded bibliography, and a 3-to-4-page statement of your argument. Your grade on these assignments will be based on the extent to which you are making progress toward your final paper, and on the quality of writing and research shown by each assignment.

A take-home final exam (20%), which will be handed out on the last day of class and will be due by email at 5:00 PM on Thursday, December 19. This exam will require you to write two 4-5 page essays; one of those essays will be an analysis of one of the books we've read this semester, and you will have some choice about which essay questions you answer.

Class participation (25%).

Here are some general observations about class participation:

- Class participation is the largest part of your grade for several reasons, but the most important one is this: I believe that being able to delve into an intelligent, nuanced, civil, and respectful discussion with your peers is one of the most important skills a liberal arts education can give you. Moreover, having everyone participate—in one way or another—makes the experience better for everyone.
- Remember that there are many ways to participate in class discussions. The strongest participants in discussion will often make comments that analyze the readings (rather than merely recapping them), but I expect that active participants in discussion will play different roles at different times. For example, here are some different rhetorical moves you might make in class:
 - Answer a question posed by me or a classmate
 - Ask a question for the class to consider

- Summarize a reading or part of a reading
- Provide evidence or an example for a point someone else has made
- Disagree (respectfully!) with a previous comment from class
- Agree with a previous comment from class while adding an example
- Connect two comments made by different discussion participants
- Connect the day's reading to an earlier reading
- In general, any form of participation that shows engagement with the material and helps the class to understand the course's subject matter is fair game. Remember, too, that class participation depends not only on speaking, but on listening—both to me and to your classmates. Be respectful, listen carefully, and be ready to respond to your classmates and not just to me.
- Although I hope that all students will take part in the discussion (ideally speaking at least once per class session on average), remember that the thoughtfulness of your comments is generally more important than the quantity of your remarks.
 - I also realize that some students will always be more talkative or more reserved than others. I'm happy to talk to you at any time about ways you might become more involved, and I think it's part of my job to make sure the classroom atmosphere is conducive to a broad, inclusive discussion.
 - Students sometimes ask if talking to me in office hours can substitute for participation in class. My answer: not entirely. Talking to me in class can show engagement with the material, so if you've been quiet in class, it can help me understand how you've related to course materials. (If you've been active in class, I'm also happy to talk to you, but coming to office hours won't improve your grade.) On the other hand, I value class participation in part because discussion helps all your classmates to understand the course material and to have a good class experience, so coming to office hours is never a perfect substitute for class discussion.
- All else being equal, it will help you to provide evidence for your arguments when you speak in class. Ground your participation in the text: be ready to quote the readings or to point out specific passages that you find useful, significant, or relevant.
- You should therefore come to class with copies of the day's reading and with your notes on what you've read. (You are welcome to bring the readings either in hard copies or on a computer, but you should remember that it is often easier to mark significant passages in a paper copy of the readings.) In particular, I recommend that you make note of quotations and details in the readings that you find especially compelling.
- Class participation depends on attendance. I'll therefore keep track of your attendance throughout the semester; missing class once or twice won't affect your grade, but if you have more than two unexcused absences, your participation grade will go down. If you have more than six unexcused absences, you will generally receive a participation grade of F or zero. Please contact me at least a week in advance if you will be missing class because of an athletic event or another campus activity.
- If you will be missing a class, you can make sure your absence does not affect your grade by sending me a 300-to-500 word email on the day's reading. Under normal circumstances, this email will be due within 24 hours of the class period; it should analyze the day's reading using the approach discussed in our primary and secondary source handouts or answer a question I posed by email to the class.

- Finally, I will generally give each student a brief “participation update” each time I send you feedback on a written assignment. I also encourage you to check in with me at any point if you have questions about the class or about how you can become more involved in the discussion.

Extension policy

Each student in the class can have one (and only one) 48-hour extension on a writing assignment over the course of the semester. To claim this extension, send me a brief email asking for extra time before the assignment’s deadline. I will grant this extension automatically, so there is no need for you to explain why you need more time. Keep in mind, however, that once you’ve been given an extension on an assignment, I will not give you an extension on another except in the case of a documented emergency. Note, too, that you can have one extension of up to 48 hours; you cannot break your extension into two 24-hour extensions, for example. In the absence of an extension, late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day.

Paper revision policy

Students in the class will also have the opportunity to revise one of their first two papers and to hand it in again for re-grading; if you choose to exercise this option, your final grade for the assignment will be the average of your original grade and the grade for your revised paper. (In other words, if you at first receive a grade of B– and you’re given a grade of B+ for the rewrite, you will earn a B on the paper overall.)

I require that students who want to revise a paper come speak to me early on in the revision process to discuss how you plan to respond to my feedback on the first version of your paper. (Please come to this meeting with a tentative plan for your revisions and a marked-up version of your original paper.) I also encourage students to bring their papers to the Writing Lab (though this is not a requirement.)

I will hand out an assignment sheet on paper revisions immediately after fall break, and you’ll have the opportunity to hand in a revised paper any time between then and the last day of classes.

Important notes

My goal is to create as inclusive a classroom as possible and to meet the needs of all of my students. I therefore encourage students with documented disabilities, including invisible or non-apparent disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, who is located on the 3rd floor of Goodnow Hall (x3089).

I will also, of course, excuse absences related to religious observance and will be flexible with deadlines that conflict with any religious holidays. Please let me know early in the semester if you expect to miss class because of a religious observance.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Friday, August 30: Introduction to the course

Reading: Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*, pp. 1-22
Matthew Leno, "Why it's time to give the Soviet Union its due for World War II" [<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/12/04/why-its-time-give-soviet-union-its-due/>]

Monday, September 2: The Dawn of a New Age of Warfare?

Reading: Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, pp. 15-50 [Pioneerweb]
Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, "World War II and the Theory of Total War" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 4: The October Revolution and the Lead-up to War

Reading: Merridale, pp. 23-48
Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, pp. 1-33 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, September 6: Nazi Germany and the Road to War

Reading: Richard Bessel, "The Aftermath of the First World War and the Rise of Nazism," pp. 1-31 [Pioneerweb]
Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Monday, September 9: Soviet Planning for War

Reading: Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, pp. 30-60 [Pioneerweb]
Overy, *Russia's War*, pp. 34-72 [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 11: The Road to Barbarossa

Reading: Richard Bessel, "The Nazi Regime and the Path to War" [Pioneerweb]

Friday, September 13: Phase One: Poland

Reading: Richard Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, pp. 3-105

Monday, September 16: Barbarossa: Was Stalin Surprised?

Readings: Overy, *Russia's War*, pp. 73-98 [Pioneerweb]
Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, pp. 61-80 [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 18: The Jedwabne Massacre

Reading: Jan Gross, *Neighbors*, up to page 70

Friday, September 20: Neighbors?

Reading: Gross, pp. 71-124

Saturday, September 21: **3-page paper is due at 5:00 PM by email**

Monday, September 23: The Results of German Planning

Reading: Evans, pp. 166-214 (skim pp. 109-165 if you have time)

Wednesday, September 25: Why so Chaotic?

Reading: Merridale, pp. 49-115
Vasilii Grossman, *A Writer at War*, pp. 18-26 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, September 27: **NO CLASS (the professor is at a conference)**

Monday, September 30: World War II in context

Reading: Benjamin Shepherd, *War in the Wild East*, pp. 1-107 [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 2: The Escalation of Violence in 1941

Reading: Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 4: Evacuation from the Front

Reading: Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Monday, October 7: The Siege of Leningrad

Reading: Richard Bidlack, "Survival Strategies in Leningrad in the First Months of the German Invasion" [Pioneerweb]
John Barber, "Leningrad's Place in the History of Famine" [Pioneerweb]
"Memoirs of the Soviet-German War: Part One, Leningrad 1941-1942," by Evgenii Moniushko [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 9: The Agonies of War

Reading: Merridale, pp. 116-171
Order No. 227 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 11: The Final Solution

Reading: Evans, pp. 217-318 (excerpts)

Assignment: **second paper is due at 5:00 PM by email**

Monday, October 14: Defection from the Red Army

Reading: Mark Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 16: Economics and War

Reading: Mark Harrison, "The USSR and Total War: Why Didn't the Soviet Economy Collapse in 1942?" [Pioneerweb]

Evans, pp. 321-372 (excerpts)

Friday, October 18: The Beginning of Partisan Warfare

Readings: Kenneth Slepyan, *Stalin's Guerillas*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
post-war documents on partisans

Assignment: **email me a brief paper proposal and a list of 3-5 sources by 3:00 PM**

FALL BREAK: OCTOBER 19-27

Monday, October 28: Life under Nazi Rule

Readings: Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*, pp. 6-58 [Pioneerweb]

Wendy Lower, "Nazi Colonialism and Ukraine" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 30: The Red Army: A Revolutionary Force?

Reading: Jochen Hellbeck, *Stalingrad: The City that Defeated the Third Reich*, pp. 2-85

Friday, November 1: Stalingrad!

Reading: Geoffrey Roberts, *Victory at Stalingrad*, 75-136 [Pioneerweb]

Merridale, pp. 171-186

Evans, pp. 403-432, esp. 409-422 (if you have time)

Monday, November 4: Stalingrad continued

Readings: Hellbeck, pp. 85-140, 203-222

Wednesday, November 6: Stalingrad: the Everyday View

Reading: Hellbeck, pp. 311-316, 356-378

Friday, November 8: Stalingrad: The Soviet and German Views

Reading: Hellbeck, 222-291, 400-430

Assignment: email me an expanded bibliography for your research paper, with a tentative thesis statement and a paragraph explaining what you've found so far (5 PM)

Monday, November 11: Kursk and Beyond

Readings: Merridale, pp. 187-225; Evans, pp. 483-538

Wednesday, November 13: Ethnicity and Loyalty

Readings: Norman Naimark, *The Fires of Hatred*, pp. 85-107 [Pioneerweb]
documents on ethnic deportations [Pioneerweb]

Friday, November 15: Women in the Red Army; the March on Berlin

Reading: Susanne Conze and Beate Fieseler, "Soviet Women as Comrades-in-Arms: A Blind Spot in the History of the War" [Pioneerweb]
Merridale, pp. 226-262

Monday, November 18: The Warsaw Uprising

Readings: Irina Mukhina, "New Revelations from the Former Soviet Archives: The Kremlin, the Warsaw Uprising, and the Coming of the Cold War" [Pioneerweb]

Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars* (excerpts) [Pioneerweb]

Assignment: **a 3-to-4-page abstract of your paper is due by 5:00 PM by email**

Wednesday, November 20: Yalta

Readings: Serhii Plokhy, *Yalta: The Price of Peace* (excerpts) [Pioneerweb]
Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
Protocols of the Yalta conference [Pioneerweb]

Friday, November 22: The Fall of Berlin

Readings: Merridale, pp. 263-335

Monday, November 25: **NO CLASS (the professor is at a conference)**

Wednesday, November 27: Popular Culture under the Nazis

Readings: Evans, pp. 540-613

Friday, November 29: **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Monday, December 2: War's End

Readings: Evans, pp. 649-737

Wednesday, December 4: The Problem of Rape in the Fall of Germany

Readings: Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Friday, December 6: The Devastation of War

Readings: Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Sunday, December 8: **research paper is due at 5:00 PM by email**

Monday, December 9: The End of Nazi Germany

Screening: *Downfall (Der Untergang)* (will be shown on the weekend at a time TBA)

Wednesday, December 11: German Memories of the Eastern Front

Readings: Robert Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German
 Pasts in the 1950s" [Pioneerweb]
 Evans, pp. 738-764

Friday, December 13: The Soviet Myth of World War II

Readings: Merridale, pp. 336-388

Assignment: last day to hand in a revised paper (by 5:00) (optional)

Thursday, December 19: **take-home exam is due by 5:00 PM by email**