

History 244: Ivan and Fritz Go to War
The Nazi-Soviet Conflict on World War II's Eastern Front
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10:00 to 10:50
Spring 2019

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Office hours: Tues. 9-11,
Wed. 1-2

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.

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- interpret a primary source (historical document) by analyzing its structure, audience, goals, and biases;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.

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.

Assignments and Grading

This course will have five main requirements, outlined below:

A 3-page paper (10% of your total grade), due on Saturday, February 16, 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 Monday, March 4, 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, May 5, 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, May 16. 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%). The final requirement for this course is active and informed participation in classroom discussions. In general, I'll be looking for evidence that you've done the reading, that you're thinking about the themes and issues covered by the class, and that you're making a good-faith effort to improve the classroom experience for everyone enrolled in the course. Remember that there are many ways to make useful contributions: the simplest way is to answer one of my questions or to bring up a detail from the readings, but participation also involves responding to your classmates, making connections between the day's readings and earlier discussions, synthesizing comments made by classmates, and asking questions of the class, the professor, or both. (Referring to specific passages in the text is always a good idea as well; the best class comments will move beyond simple summary of a text to explain its larger significance.) Over the course of the semester, I'll encourage everyone to participate in different ways, both to recall details, anecdotes, and ideas from the readings and to analyze our course materials in light of the themes of the course and the results of our discussions. The best way to participate in class, then, is to speak regularly in a variety of ways, showing your mastery of the material and helping the class to discuss the readings in a thoughtful way.

I do not have an ironclad rule about how often each student needs to speak in class: you should generally average at least one comment or question per class period, but I understand that some of you will always be more reserved than others and that everyone has days when they're less likely to participate. My main advice, then, is that you come speak to me if you're concerned about your level of participation or want advice on how to get more involved in class, and that you remember that the thoughtfulness of your classroom comments is more important than the frequency with which you speak. I will also provide written feedback on your participation each time I hand back a paper.

A few other notes:

- Remember that class participation depends on attendance. I'll be keeping track of attendance throughout the semester; if you miss class once or twice, that won't affect your performance in the course, but if you have more than two absences, your participation grade will go down (unless you can provide documentation of a health issue or an emergency). If you have more than six unexcused absences, you will generally receive a participation grade of F or zero, which could have a significant effect on your total grade. (Be sure to notify me ahead of time if you'll be missing class for an athletic event or another official school activity.)
- In order to pass the class, students must hand in all the written assignments listed above.
- If your grade rises steadily over the course of the semester, I will take that into consideration in determining your final grade.

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.

Office Hours

I hold office hours on Tuesday from 9:00 to 11:00 and on Wednesday from 1:00 to 2:00. These are drop-in hours; you are welcome to come by without an appointment (and, in fact, I will generally 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, registration week) and instead offer meetings by appointment only.

Important notes

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, located on the 3rd floor of the Rosenfield Center and discuss your needs with him. Students should then notify me within the first few days of classes so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course and coordinate your accommodations.

Students should also be aware of Grinnell's policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism, it goes without saying, will not be tolerated in this course.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Wednesday, January 23: Introduction to the course

Reading: Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*, pp. 1-22
Matthew Lenoe, "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/>]

Friday, January 25: 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]

Monday, January 28: The October Revolution and the Lead-up to War

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

Wednesday, January 30: 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]

Friday, February 1: Soviet Planning for War

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

Monday, February 4: The Road to Barbarossa

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

Wednesday, February 6: Phase One: Poland

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

Friday, February 8: The Jedwabne Massacre

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

Monday, February 11: Neighbors?

Reading: Gross, pp. 71-124

Wednesday, February 13: Barbarossa: Was Stalin Surprised?

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

Friday, February 15: The Results of German Planning

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

Saturday, February 16: **3-page paper is due at 5:00 PM by email**

Monday, February 18: Why so Chaotic?

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

Wednesday, February 20: World War II in context

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

Friday, February 22: The Escalation of Violence in 1941

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

Monday, February 25: Evacuation from the Front

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

Wednesday, February 27: 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]

Friday, March 1: The Agonies of War

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

Monday, March 4: The Final Solution
Reading: no reading assignment
Assignment: **second paper is due at 5:00 PM by email**

Wednesday, March 6: The Final Solution, part 2

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

Friday, March 8: Defection from the Red Army

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

Monday, March 11: 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)

Wednesday, March 13: The Beginning of Partisan Warfare

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

Friday, March 15: Life under Nazi Rule

Readings: Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*, pp. 6-58 [Pioneerweb]
Wendy Lower, "Nazi Colonialism and Ukraine" [Pioneerweb]
Assignment: **email me a brief paper proposal and a list of 3-5 sources by 3:00 PM**

SPRING BREAK: MARCH 18 – MARCH 29

Monday, April 1: The Red Army: A Revolutionary Force?

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

Wednesday, April 3: 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)

Friday, April 5: Stalingrad continued

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

Monday, April 8: Stalingrad: the Everyday View

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

Wednesday, April 10: 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)

Friday, April 12: Kursk and Beyond

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

Monday, April 15: Ethnicity and Loyalty

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

Wednesday, April 17: 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

Friday, April 19: 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**

Monday, April 22: Yalta

Readings: Serhii Plokhy, *Yalta: The Price of Peace* (excerpts) [Pioneerweb]

Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Protocols of the Yalta conference [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, April 24: The Fall of Berlin

Readings: Merridale, pp. 263-335

Friday, April 26: Popular Culture under the Nazis

Readings: Evans, pp. 540-613

Monday, April 29: War's End

Readings: Evans, pp. 649-737

Wednesday, May 1: The Problem of Rape in the Fall of Germany

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

Friday, May 3: The Devastation of War

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

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

Monday, May 6: The End of Nazi Germany

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

Wednesday, May 8: 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, May 10: 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, May 16: **take-home exam is due by 5:00 PM by email**