In the United States, World War II is often called “The Good War,” with those who fought it considered “the greatest generation.” One of the most important events in twentieth-century American history, the war had a profound effect on America’s government, its culture, its economy, and its position in the world. In this course, we will explore both how the war changed the United States, and what this transformational event demonstrates about enduring structures of American politics, ideology, and culture. Over the course of the semester, students will asked to engage with many different kinds of primary sources (including political tracts, posters, films, letters, cartoons, and oral histories). They will also be introduced to some of the major historical debates about the war: Did the United States do all it could to help European Jews escape the Holocaust? Why were Japanese-Americans interned? Was the American decision to use atomic bombs in Japan justified, either militarily or morally? We will also pay particular attention to issues of gender and sexuality, to the lived experience during World War II, and to the role that World War II plays in contemporary political discourse in the United States. Besides our regular class meetings, there will be two required film screenings outside of class.

COURSE READINGS:
The following books are available at the Oberlin bookstore and are on reserve at Mudd.


E.B. Sledge, With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa (Oxford Univ. Press, 1990)


Readings marked with an asterisk (*) on the syllabus are available on the course blackboard site under the “Course Readings” heading. Please do the reading carefully, pay particular attention to primary documents, and look over any posted reading questions before coming to class so that we can use class time effectively.
REQUIRED FILMS: As a class, we will be screening two required films outside of regularly scheduled class times. The films will also be on reserve at the library for those who cannot make the arranged screening time.

_Bataan_ (1944)  
Screening during week of 3/7

_Best Years of Our Lives_ (1946):  
Screening during week of 4/25

If anyone is interested in screening more WWII era films together as a group, please see me. If there is enough interest, we can arrange for a film series to take place at my house over the course of the semester.

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Grades in the History 244 will be based on class participation, a map quiz, and three papers (a 2-3 page paper, a 5-page paper, and an 8-10 page final paper).

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (20%)**: Discussion will be a central part of this course. Students will be expected to participate regularly in class. It is crucial that you keep up with the course reading and come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed for each class session. If you are shy about speaking in class, please see me to discuss strategies to make participation easier. Attendance and class participation will count for 20% of your overall course grade.

As part of your participation, each student will be put into a discussion group of approximately 5 students. Six of the class sessions are designated as “Discussion Sessions” (the class meetings on 2/25, 3/11, 3/18, 4/6, 4/13 and 4/27). During these classes, we will spend some time focusing on a required film or reading. In advance of these six sessions, you will be required to post a response to a discussion question/s about the readings or film on your group’s discussion forum on the blackboard site. Each member of the must read the posts of the other group members before coming to class. Part of the class discussion time will be spent in these smaller groups.

**MAP QUIZ—MARCH 2ND (5%)**: There will be a short map quiz at the beginning of class on March 2nd. You will be asked to locate sites important to the Pacific and the European theaters of the war. A list of places that you need to be able to place on a map will be handed out in class.
PAPER #1—DUE FEB. 22\textsuperscript{nd} (20\%): For this Short paper (no more than three pages), students will be asked to use the press reports in December 7: The First Thirty Hours to make a case about the public response to Pearl Harbor and about what historians can learn about the national mood and the range of views after the bombing. Due by 10:00 a.m., on Monday, February 22\textsuperscript{nd}.

PAPER #2—DUE MARCH 25\textsuperscript{th} (25\%): A 5-6 page paper comparing different historical interpretations of America’s response to the Holocaust will be due in class on March 25\textsuperscript{th}.

PAPER #3—DUE MAY 13\textsuperscript{th} (30\%): For the final paper in History 244, each student will write a research paper about any aspect of US involvement in World War II that interests you. These papers must be 8-10 pages long and must use a minimum of 6 primary sources. Papers should also refer to the relevant secondary source literature. All papers are due at the final class session on May 14\textsuperscript{th}. The following deadlines are associated with the final paper:

  - Thursday, April 8\textsuperscript{th}: 1-page proposals of paper topic due. These proposals must also include a preliminary bibliography of both primary and secondary sources.
  - Friday, April 23\textsuperscript{rd}: Research progress report, along with updated primary and secondary source bibliographies due by 5:00 p.m.
  - Week of May 3\textsuperscript{rd}-May 7\textsuperscript{th}: Individual consultations with professor to discuss progress
  - Thursday, May 13\textsuperscript{th}: Final papers due in class.

COURSE POLICIES:

GRADING AND LATE PAPERS: All work will be graded on a 100-point scale. Late papers will be marked down five points for every day turned in past the deadline. Extensions will be given only for medical reasons or family emergencies. Students must ask about extensions before the paper is due. Assignments will not be accepted more than 5 days past the original due date. Students must complete all of the assignments in order to pass the class.

OBERLIN HONOR CODE: All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with immediately according to the letter of college policy. Plagiarism is passing the work of others off as your own work. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, to books, to the media). If you have questions about how to footnote, please ask.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Appropriate accommodations will be granted to students with documented disabilities. Please see me at the beginning of the semester to discuss the accommodations you need.

GENERAL COURTESY: Please come to class on time, and once you’re here, plan on staying for the full class session. If you must arrive late or leave early, please let me know ahead of time. Be sure to TURN OFF your cell phone before class starts.

COMPUTERS IN THE CLASSROOM: Students are welcome to take notes on a laptop during class, but students who wish to use a computer must sit in the front of the classroom.
COURSE SCHEDULE

February 9: Introduction

PART I: THE ROAD TO WAR

February 11: Background to War

Richard Overy, “Unpredictable Victory: Explaining World War II,” from Why the Allies Won, 1-24*

February 16: The U.S. Response in the 30s

Documents in MP, pp. 6-16 (Chapt. 1, #1-5)


A Catalog of Political Cartoons by Dr. Seuss*

Go to the website and browse through one month's worth of political cartoons from the period between January and November 1941

February 18: American Entry into World War II

Documents in MP, pp. 17-22 (Chapt. 1, #6-8)

Selection of press reports from December 7: The First Thirty Hours*

Bruce Russett, “An Unnecessary and Avoidable War,” in MP, 23-32

Gerhard Weinberg, “A Necessary and Unavoidable War” in MP, 33-40

February 22: First Paper Due by 10:00 a.m.

PART II: MOBILIZING FOR AND FIGHTING THE WAR

February 23: Mobilizing a Nation for War

Brinkley, Washington Goes to War, Chapters 5, pp. 104-136*

Design for Victory, Chapters 1 &2, pp. 1-25

Documents in Major Problems, pp. 42-48, 51-53 (Chapt 2., #1-2, 5)


February 25: DISCUSSION SESSION—Framing and Selling the War

Robert Westbrook, “‘I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl that Married Henry James’: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in WWII,” American Quarterly (December 1990): 587-614*

Design for Victory, Chapter 3, pp. 27-49

Please post to your group’s discussion forum by 10:00 p.m., Feb. 24th.

March 2: Fighting the War, 1941-42 (Map Quiz at start of class)

Documents in MP, pp. 77-88, 286-290 (Chap. 3, #1-7; Chap. 4, #2; Chap. 8, #2-3)

John Dower, “Race, Language, and War in Two Cultures: World War II in Asia” in War in American Culture, 169-201

Franklin Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, February 3, 1942*

March 4: Fighting the War, 1942-1943

Documents in MP, pp. 113-117, 178-179 (Chapt. 4, #2-4; Chapt 5, #4)

Richard Overy, “The Naval and Air Campaigns as Critical to Allied Victory,” MP, pp. 135-149

Michael Sherry, “Strategic Bombing as Technological Fanaticism, MP, 149-155

March 9: Fighting the War, 1944-1945

Documents in MP, pp. 118-121, 126-134, 183-185, 293-295 (Chapt. 4, #5, 9-10; Chapt 5, #6; Chapt. 8, #5)

March 11: DISCUSSION SESSION: The Experience of Combat

E.B Sledge, With the Old Breed (entire)

Bataan (1944)—Screening time and place TBD

Please post to your group’s discussion forum by 10:00 p.m., March 10th.
March 16: Fighting in a Segregated Army

Letters from African American Soldiers*

Oral Histories from We Were There: Voices of African American Veterans from World War II to the War In Iraq, 5-52*

March 18: DISCUSSION SESSION--The Atomic Bomb

J. Samuel Walker, Prompt and Utter Destruction (entire)

Documents in MP, pp. 405-407 (Chapt. 11, #9-11)

Please post to your group’s discussion forum by 10:00 p.m., March 17th.

March 23: Civil Liberties during WWII

Documents in MP, pp. 56-57, 216, 227-230 (Chapt. 2, #8, Chapt. 6, #3, 9)

Oral histories of Mary Tsukamoto and Yuri Tateishi in John Tateishi, ed., And Justice for All 3-15, 23-26*

Milton Eisenhower Justifies the Evacuation (1942)*

Korematsu v. United States decision, 1942*

March 25: America Responds to the Holocaust

Second paper due at the beginning of class

PART III: THE HOMEFRONT

April 6: DISCUSSION SESSION—Wartime Migrations and Labor Relations

Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, Abiding Courage

Design for Victory, Chapter 4, pp. 51-81

Please post to your group’s discussion forum by 10:00 p.m., April 5th.

April 8: Rosie the Riveter

In Class: Screening of “The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter”

April 13: DISCUSSION SESSION--The Image and Reality of Women on the Homefront

Elaine May, “Rosie the Riveter Gets Married” in War in American Culture, 128-143

Melissa Dabakis, “Gendered Labor: Norman Rockwell's Rosie the Riveter and the Discourses of Wartime Womanhood,” 182-204*

Documents in MP, pp. 48-49, 256-258 (Chapt. 2, #3; Chap. 7, #6)

Please post to your group’s discussion forum by 10:00 p.m., April 12th.
April 15: Growing up during War: Childhood and Family Life

Perry Duis, “No Time for Privacy: World War II and Chicago’s Families” in War in American Culture, 17-45

William Tuttle, “Children’s Entertainment” in Daddy’s Gone to War, 148-160*

April 20: Race Wars at Home

Documents in MP, pp. 213-215, 222-224 (Chapt.6, #1, 7)


Edward Escobar, “Zoot-Suiters and Cops: Chicano Youth and the Los Angeles Police Department during World War II” in War in American Culture, 284-309

April 22: Cultural Change: Sexuality & Popular Culture Abroad and at Home

Documents in MP, pp. 249-255 (Chapt. 7, #1-4)

Allan Berube, “Marching to a Different Drummer: Lesbian and Gay GIs in World War II” in Hidden from History, 383-394*

Lewis Erenberg, “Swing Goes to War: Glenn Miller and the Popular Music of World War II” in War in American Culture, 144-165

PART IV: THE LEGACIES OF WAR

April 27: DISCUSSION SESSION—Demobilization and the GI Bill


Best Years of Our Lives (1946)—Screening time and place TBA

Please post to your group's discussion forum by 10:00 p.m., April 26th.

April 29: Postwar Legacies

Alan Brinkley, “WWII and American Liberalism” in War in American Culture, 313-330

Design for Victory, Chapter 5 and Epilogue, pp. 83-101

Documents in Major Problems, pp. 298-300 (Chapt. 8, #8)

Gordon Wright, “Science Revolutionizes Warfare” in MP, 311-320
May 4: World War II and the Shape of Postwar Europe

Major Problems, Chapter 10, pp. 359-393

May 6: World War II and Postwar Asia

John Dower, Embracing Defeat, 73-84, 525-546*

May 11: World War II in Historical Memory

Visit the Oberlin WWII Memorial (next to Finney) before class

WWII Memorial Website (linked on blackboard under “WWII Resources”)

Read the “Memorial Design” and “Inscription” fact sheets. Look at photos of the memorial on the website

Michael Adams, “Postwar Mythmaking About World War II,” in MP, pp. 428-437

Richard Kohn, “Culture War Erupts Over the 1994-95 Smithsonian Institutions’ Enola Gay Exhibition,” in MP, 453-461

May 13: Conclusions

Research Paper Due in Class