

**History 244:
The United States in World War II
T/TH 11:00-12:20, King 343
Spring 2022**

Professor Renee Romano
Phone: 775-6584
rromano@oberlin.edu

Office Hours, Rice 314
Wednesdays, 10:30am-12:00pm
Thursdays, 3:00pm-4:30pm

Course Website: <https://sites.google.com/oberlin.edu/history244/home>
Link for zoom sessions if necessary: <https://oberlin.zoom.us/j/89661452338>

World War II, often referred to in the United States as “the Good War,” was 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 the military, political, social, and cultural history of the war. We will ask how America mobilized for and fought the war, 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, we will engage with a wide range of primary and secondary sources as we explore how the war changed the United States and how it impacted Americans of many different identities and backgrounds.

As a key part of the class, each student will also undertake an original historical research project about some aspect of U.S. WWII history. These projects will draw on both primary and secondary sources to explore an aspect of American wartime history that interests you. You will have wide latitude not only in deciding on your research topic but also in choosing how you want to convey your research findings.

History 244 has a [course website](#), which is where you will find an online syllabus, the readings, information about assignments, and other resources. We will only be using the course blackboard site for discussion forum posts. Please bookmark the online syllabus for reference throughout the class.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the history of US involvement in World War II and how the war affected the trajectory of American political, military economic, and social history
- Demonstrate knowledge of how gender, race, and other identities affected the experience of Americans’ during the war
- Recognize the difference between primary and secondary sources and be able to analyze primary sources in their historical context
- Gain facility with historical research and become more confident in posing and answering historical research questions
- Make clear arguments based on evidence and communicate those arguments effectively
- Contribute to the community of the classroom through participation and discussion



REQUIRED TEXTS: Books are available at the Oberlin bookstore and are on reserve at Terrell Library. All other readings on the syllabus are on the course blackboard site.

Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community (UNC Press, 1996) [also available as e-book through library]

Richard Overy, Why the Allies Won (W.W. Norton, 1995)

E.B. Sledge, With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa, 2nd ed. (Random House, 2007)

Yoshiko Uchida, Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family, 2nd ed. (University of Washington Press, 2015) [also available as e-book through library]

J. Samuel Walker, Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan, 3rd ed. (University of North Carolina Press, 2016) [also available as e-book through library]

You will find all other readings, an online syllabus, and information about assignments on the History 244 class website: <https://sites.google.com/oberlin.edu/history244/home>.

REQUIRED FILMS: In addition to the books, there are six required films for History 244 (three documentaries and three feature films from the WWII era). Some films can be streamed via the course website; others can be rented through various streaming services and are on reserve at Terrell Library. If there is enough interest, I will arrange public screenings of the feature films.

<i>Casablanca</i> (Warner Brothers, 1942)	Screen for class of 3/15
<i>Bataan</i> (MGM, 1943)	Screen for class of 3/29
<i>The Negro Soldier</i> (1944)	Screen for class on 3/31
<i>The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter</i> (1980)	Screen for class of 4/28
<i>Coming Out Under Fire</i> (Deepfocus Productions, 1994)	Screen for class of 5/5
<i>Best Years of Our Lives</i> (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946)	Screen for class of 5/12

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Grades in the History 244 will be based on class participation and blackboard postings, a map quiz, two short papers, and a historical research project:

Map Quiz (In-class on March 10)	5% of final grade
Attendance and Participation:	10% final grade
Blackboard Postings:	15% of final grade
Primary Source Paper (Due March 17):	15% of final grade
Atomic Bomb Paper (Due April 20):	20% of final grade
Final Research Project (Due Tues., May 31 at 4pm):	35% of final grade

Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. An assignment that is handed in late will be marked down 3 points for every 24 hours it is late. Requests for extensions must take place before the assignment is due. I will gladly grant extensions in cases of illness or family emergencies, but not because you have another paper due on the same day, so please plan accordingly. All assignments must be turned in in order to pass the course.

- **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (10%):** Your active involvement with the class is extremely important. Attendance, reading, and participation are critical to your learning and your success in History 244. Regular class attendance is expected and spotty attendance will be reflected in your final grade. It is also vital that you keep up with the reading. This course has an average of 40 pages of reading for each session, and occasionally more if we are reading a book). You should come to every class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day on the

syllabus. I will always ask about the readings during class. If you have trouble speaking in class, please come see me during my office hours so we can develop strategies to help you become a more active participant in class discussion.

- BLACKBOARD POSTINGS (15%): There is a question/prompt on the syllabus for six different sessions over the course of the semester (March 3, March 29, April 12, April 26, May 3, and May 12). Each student is required to post a response to the Blackboard discussion board for each of these sessions. Posts should be around 150-200 words and should refer to specific examples from class materials. The six classes with required blackboard postings will be devoted partly or primarily to discussion. In order to facilitate discussion, the class will be split into smaller learning groups at the start of the semester. Each learning community will have their own discussion forum. All students are required to post their response to their learning group's discussion forum by 9:00am on the day of the class discussion. Each member of the learning group should try to read the posts of other group members before coming to class. Part of the class discussion time will be spent in learning groups.
- MAP QUIZ—MARCH 10 (5%): There will be a short map quiz at the beginning of class on Thursday, March 10. 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 is available on the course website and will be handed out in class. Reference maps are also available on the course website.
- PAPER #1—DUE BY START OF CLASS ON MARCH 17 (15%): For this short paper (maximum of 1200 words) you will do a primary source analysis of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chat of February 3, 1942. Papers must be uploaded to the appropriate Google folder (linked on the course website) by 11am on Thursday, March 17. Additional details are available on the website.
- PAPER #2—DUE BY 5:00PM ON APRIL 20 (20%): For this assignment, you will take on a persona of your choice and write a memo of no more than 1500 words advising Harry Truman about whether and how he should use the atomic bomb based on the perspective of your chosen character. Papers must be uploaded to the appropriate Google folder (linked on the course website) by 5pm on Wednesday, April 20. Additional details are available on the website.
- RESEARCH PROJECT—DUE AT TIME OF FINAL EXAM, TUES., MAY 31, 4pm (35%): Each student will do an original research project about an aspect of US involvement in World War II. You may choose to write a research paper of approximately 5000 words (10 pages), or you may choose to present your research in another way, such as creating a podcast, making a short film, creating an online exhibit, or doing a website. Whatever medium you choose, the research and work should be equivalent to a 10-page research paper. All project topics and formats will need to be approved by me. All projects must use, at a minimum, at least 6 different primary sources and 3 different secondary sources (most projects will use significantly more), and must include a written bibliography. There are a variety of small scaffolded assignments associated with this project, including submitting an initial proposal, a reflection on the primary sources you plan to use, an annotated bibliography of secondary sources, and a brief in-class presentation. The final version of the project will be due by 4:00pm on Tuesday, May 31. All assignments should be uploaded to the appropriate Google folders linked on the course website. ALL assignments must have your last name in the file title; use the format of your last name and the name of the assignment (i.e., "Romano, Annotated Bibliography.doc")

- Sunday, March 13 by midnight: Upload a short proposal (no more than one page) that describes your topic, identifies your research question, and explains what format you are thinking about using in your project.
- Sunday, April 3 by midnight: Upload a short report on what kinds of primary sources you could use to explore your research question. What different kinds of primary sources might be interesting for you to look at? How accessible are they? How might focusing on different bodies of sources affect what you can discover about your topic?
- Sunday, May 8 by midnight: Upload short project update and annotated secondary source bibliography (minimum of three sources)
- Week of May 9th-13th: Individual consultations with professor to discuss progress
- Thursday, May 26th: Speed presentations about projects at our last class session
- Tuesday, May 31 by 4:00pm: Final Projects due

COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Environment: World War II is a fascinating subject, but one that unavoidably requires consideration of some very difficult issues. In this course, you will learn and read about brutality on the battlefield, the bombing of civilian populations, genocide, racism, and sexism, as well as other challenging topics. I will try to let you know when a reading or lecture includes particularly graphic material. I also ask that everyone in the class take on the responsibility of helping to make this an enriching and safe space for learning, making arguments, expressing our views, disagreeing with others' ideas, and raising questions. "Safe" is not the same as comfortable; there may be moments of discomfort in discussion, but we all need to bring patience and respect into the classroom. Respecting our class space also means coming to class on time and being attentive while in class.

Oberlin Honor Code: All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code, which means that it must be your own. Plagiarism is presenting the work of another as your own; it is a form of stealing. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, books, the media, etc.). If you have questions about citations, academic honesty, or the acceptability of collaborations, please see me. You should include the honor code ("I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment") on all the written work you hand in for this class.

Educational Access: I am committed to designing a course in which all students can learn and to creating inclusive learning environments. Please let me know if there are aspects of the instruction or design of the course that result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services in Peters G-27/G-28 for official documentation if you require specific accommodations.

Extra Help: I am happy to meet students any time, whether you are seeking guidance on assignments or you want to discuss the reading or other topics of interest to you. Please come to office hours or make an appointment to see me at another time as often as you like. If you need to contact me, the best way to reach me is via email. I will always respond within 24 hours, if not sooner. I am happy to provide feedback on drafts, whether complete drafts of papers or just a topic sentence, but you must get any draft writings to me at least **four days** before the paper is due so that I have time to give you feedback.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. THE ROAD TO WAR

February 22: Course Introduction (We will meet in person, not online)

February 24: Background to War

Richard Overy, Why the Allies Won, Chapter 1, pp. 1-24

March 1: The U.S. Response in the 30s

Neutrality Acts, 1935-1939

Franklin Roosevelt's "Quarantine Speech" (1937) and Lend-Lease Proposals (1940)

A Catalog of Political Cartoons by Dr. Seuss* (*browse cartoons from between Jan-Nov 1941*)

March 3: The Great Debate/Developing Research Paper Topics (Blackboard Post #1 due by 9am)

Complete the "Asking Historical Questions" Website and Exercises before class (~2 to 3 hrs).

Laura McEnaney, "He-Men and Christian Mothers: The America First Movement and the Gendered Meanings of Patriotism and Isolationism," *Diplomatic History*, 47-57

Blackboard Post: Take on the persona of either an isolationist or an interventionist. Make a case for why your position is the patriotic one and the one that is the best for the future of the country.

March 8: Pearl Harbor and American Entry into World War II

Diplomatic correspondence between U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull and nation of Japan, November 26, 1941-December 7, 1941 in Mark Stoler and Molly Michelmore, ed., The United States in World War II: A Documentary History (Hackett Publishing, 2018), 24-31

Watch President Roosevelt's Declaration of War, December 8, 1941

Stephen Ambrose, "Just Dumb Luck: U.S. Entry Into World War II" in Pearl Harbor Revisited, 93-102.

II: MOBILIZING FOR AND FIGHTING THE WAR

March 10: Mobilizing a Nation for War (Map Quiz at the Start of Class)

David Brinkley, Washington Goes to War, Chapter 5, pp. 104-136

Overy, Why the Allies Won, Chapter 6, pp. 180-207

Watch Walt Disney, "The Spirit of 1943"

March 15: Framing and Selling the War

Casablanca (1942) [watch before class]

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

March 17: Fighting the War, 1941-1942 (Paper due at the start of class)

Franklin Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, February 3, 1942

Overy, Why the Allies Won, Chapter 2, pp. 25-62 (Chapter 8, pp. 245-281 optional)

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

March 22: Fighting the War, 1942-1943

A Mother Questions and General Arnold's Staff defends strategic bombing, 1943

Overy, Why the Allies Won, Chapters and 4 and 7, pp. 101-133, 208-244

Michael Sherry, "Strategic Bombing as Technological Fanaticism," excerpted in Major Problems in the History of World War II, 149-155

March 24: Fighting the War, 1944-1945

D-Day Primary Source Resource Packet, The First Division Museum at Cantigny

Overy, Why the Allies Won, Chpt. 5, 134-179



March 29: The Experience of Combat (Blackboard Post #2 due by 9am)

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

Bataan (1944) [watch before class]

Blackboard Post: In what ways does Sledge's description of the combat experience resonate with or differ from your picture of WWII? What might Sledge have thought of the film *Bataan*?

March 31: Fighting in a Segregated Army

"The Negro Soldier" (1944): *Watch this 40-minute propaganda film before class*

Thomas Guglielmo, "A Martial Freedom Movement: Black G.I.s' Political Struggles during World War II," *Journal of American History* (March 2018): 879-903

April 12: The US Responds to the Holocaust (Blackboard Post #3 due by 9am)

Selection of primary sources about the Holocaust from Mark Stoler and Molly Michelmores, ed., The United States in World War II: A Documentary History (Hackett Publishing, 2018), pp. 244-263

David Wyman, The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945 (New York: The New Press, 1985), xiii-15

William J. Vanden Heuvel, "The Successes of American Rescue and the Limits of the Possible," in Major Problems in the History of World War II, 349-357

Blackboard Post: Considering their arguments and the primary documents assigned for today's class, do you think Wyman or Vanden Heuvel offers a better argument about the US response to the Holocaust?

April 14: The Atomic Bomb

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

Selection of primary sources about the atomic bomb from Mark Stoler and Molly Michelmore, ed., The United States in World War II: A Documentary History (Hackett Publishing, 2018), pp. 332-342

III: THE HOMEFRONT

April 19: Oberlin During WWII: Visit to Special Collections

Susan Haskell, "'Less Frills in Everything': Oberlin College Life during the Second World War," 1995

*The class will be split into two groups who will each spend 40 minutes at Special Collections, on the 4th Floor of Terrell Library. Group 1 (students with last names A-Je will visit from 11:00-11:40; students with last names Jo-Z will visit from 11:40-12:20). Please arrive **five minutes** before your session starts so you have time to put your coat/backpacks in lockers. You will only be allowed to bring in a notebook and pencil into Special Collections.*

Wednesday, April 20 at 5pm: Atomic Bomb Paper Due

April 21: Race Wars at Home

Call to March on Washington, 1941

Carey McWilliams, "The Zoot Suit Riots," *The New Republic*, June 21, 1943, p. 18-20

Robin Kelley, "Congested Terrain: Resistance on Public Transportation" in Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class, pp. 55-76

April 26: Japanese Internment and Civil Liberties during WWII (Blackboard Post #4 due by 9am)

Yoshiko Uchida, Desert Exile (entire)

"How to Tell Japs from the Chinese," *Life Magazine*, December 22, 1941

Milton Eisenhower Justifies the Evacuation (1942)

Blackboard Post: Based on this memoir, how would you describe the response of Japanese Americans to internment or the impact of internment on the Japanese American community? In your post, point to a specific passage in Uchida's memoir that you thought was particularly compelling or revealing.

April 28: The Image and Reality of Women on the Homefront

Ann Sothorn, "What Kind of Woman Will Your Man Come Home To?," November 1944

Elaine May, "Rosie the Riveter Gets Married," in The War in American Culture, 128-143

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

The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter (1980) [watch before class]

May 3: African American Women Migrants (Blackboard Post #5 due by 9am)

Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, Abiding Courage (entire)

Blackboard Post: Based on both classes for this week, write a post considering how the war affected American women and how that impact may have differed depending on a woman's race or class background.

May 5: Sexuality and Love during Wartime

Coming Out Under Fire (directed by Arthur Dong, 1994), 73 minutes

Marilyn Hegarty, "'A Buffer of Whores': Military and Social Ambivalence about Sexuality and Gender" in Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackis, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II, pp. 85-109

May 10: Family and Childhood in Wartime

"As the Twig is Bent," 1943 Aetna Life film on juvenile delinquency

William Tuttle, "Working Mothers and Latchkey Children" and "School-Age Children Fight the War" in Daddy's Gone to War, pp. 69-90, 112-133

Mia Sostaric, "The American Propaganda During World War II: How Comic Books Sold the War," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 38:1 (July 2021), pp 17-29 only

IV: THE LEGACIES OF WAR

May 12: Demobilization and the GI Bill (Blackboard Post #6 by 9am)

Best Years of Our Lives (1946)

Margot Canaday, "Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship under the GI Bill," *Journal of American History* 90 (Dec. 2003): 935-957

Laura McEnaney, "Nightmares on Elm Street: Demobilizing in Chicago, 1945-1953," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1265-1291

Blackboard Post: What were people's fears or concerns about soldiers coming home after the war? How does Best Years of Our Lives suggest that the problems of reconversion and demobilization can be resolved? How do the solutions in the film compare to those in the readings?



May 17: Domestic Legacies of World War II

Stuart Schrader, "Cops at War: How World War II Transformed U.S. Policing," *Modern American History* 4 (2021): 159-179

Gordon Wright, "Science Revolutionizes Warfare" in Major Problems in the History of World War II, 311-320

May 19: The US and the Global Legacies of World War II

Henry Luce, excerpts from "The American Century," *Life Magazine*, March 17, 1941

David Kennedy, "The Origins and Uses of American Hyperpower" in *Short American Century: A Postmortem* (2012), pp. 15-37

Walter LaFeber, "Illusions of an American Century," in *Short American Century*, pp. 158-186.

May 24: World War II in Historical Memory

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

Review photos, “Memorial Design,” and Inscription” fact sheets on the website of the National WWII Memorial

Michael Adams, “Mythmaking and the War” in The Best War Ever: America and World War II, pp. 1-19

May 26: Conclusions and Brief Presentations

May 31, 4:00pm: Final Projects Due