

History 295: Ivan and Fritz Go to War
The Nazi-Soviet Conflict on World War II's Eastern Front
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 11:00-11:50
Fall 2008

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Office hours: MW 3:00-4:00,
TTh 10:00-11:00
(or by appointment)

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 course, 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 lecture/discussion course will begin with 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*
Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*
Geoffrey Megargee, *War of Annihilation*
Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*
Richard Overy, *Russia's War*
Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East*

The course readings will also include a series of journal articles and excerpts from primary sources, which will be available electronically on the class's Pioneerweb site.

Assignments and Grading

This course will have four main requirements, described below:

Two 5-page papers (25% of your total grade). In the first half of the course, you will write two 5-page papers, due on Wednesday, October 1 (at midnight) and on Friday, October 17 (in class.)

I will hand out the topic for each paper roughly ten days before its due date; both papers will require you to synthesize materials we have read for class.

Research paper (25%). In the second half of the course, you will write a 10-page paper on a topic of your choice related to the war; it will be due to me by email at midnight (the end of the day) on Wednesday, December 10. You will be free to select a topic of interest to you (developing a topic discussed in class in greater depth or pursuing a subject we haven't covered), but I'll need to approve your topic. After fall break, I'll hand out a timetable for this project, which will include several preliminary assignments (such as sending me a list of books you've looked at or giving me a 1-page summary of your argument.)

Final exam (25%). The course will end with a take-home examination, due to me by email by 5:00 PM on Thursday, December 18. You will most likely need to answer two essay questions (from a selection of at least three choices.)

Class participation (25%). The final requirement for this course is active and informed participation in classroom discussions. I will base this part of your grade on several criteria, including attendance, frequency of participation, the insightfulness of your classroom comments, and the timely completion of the preliminary assignments connected to your final paper; although I hope that everyone will participate regularly, note that the insightfulness of your comments is more important than the frequency of your participation.

NOTE: In addition to the requirements listed above, I reserve the right to fail (or to further lower the grade of) any student with more than six unexcused absences. If your grade seems likely to suffer significantly from your absences or your lack of participation, I will let you know early enough that you have time to correct the problem. If you have any concerns about your level of participation, feel free to contact me at any time and we can discuss ways to increase your involvement in discussion.

Important notes

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation identifying any special needs to the Dean for Student Academic Support and Advising, Joyce Stern, whose office is located on the third floor of the Rosenfield Center. Students should then notify me within the first few days of class.

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

Friday, August 29: Introduction to the course

Reading: Ronald Smelser and Edward J. Davies II, *The Myth of the Eastern Front*, pp. 1-6 [Pioneerweb]
David M. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, pp. xv-xix [Pioneerweb]
Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*, introduction

Monday, September 1: 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 3: The October Revolution and the Lead-up to War

Reading: Merridale, ch. 1
Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, ch. 1

Friday, September 5: Nazi Germany and the Road to War

Reading: Volker Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Monday, September 8: German War Aims and the Origins of the War

Reading: Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht*, ch. 1 [Pioneerweb]
Geoffrey Megargee, *War of Annihilation*, ch. 1-2

Wednesday, September 10: Soviet Planning for War

Reading: Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
Richard Overy, ch. 2

Friday, September 12: The Chaos of 1941

Readings: Vasilii Grossman, *A Writer at War*, pp. 18-26 [Pioneerweb]
G. H. Bidermann, *In Deadly Combat*, pp. 13-35 [Pioneerweb]
Megargee, ch. 3

Monday, September 15: Why so Chaotic?

Reading: Merridale, chapters 2-3
Overy, ch. 3

Wednesday, September 17: Origins of the War of Annihilation

Reading: Megargee, ch. 4-5

Friday, September 19: Barbarossa and its Outcome

Reading: Megargee, ch. 6 and conclusion
Willy Peter Reese, *A Stranger to Myself*, pp. 31-57

Monday, September 22: Evacuation

Reading: John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
Rebecca Manley, "Popular Responses to Evacuation" [Pioneerweb]
Isaak Kobylyansky, "Memories of War, Part 1" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 24: Life in Leningrad and Moscow

Reading: Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, ch. 4
"Memoirs of the Soviet-German War: Part One, Leningrad 1941-1942," by
Evgenii Moniushko [Pioneerweb]

Friday, September 26: Discipline and the Primary Group in the German Army

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

Monday, September 29: The Order Police in Russia and Poland

Reading: Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*, up to p. 78

Wednesday, October 1: Genocide and the SS

Reading: Browning, *Ordinary Men*, pp. 79 to 132

FIRST PAPER IS DUE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1 AT MIDNIGHT

Friday, October 3: Were they Really Ordinary?

Reading: Browning, *Ordinary Men*, pp. 133 to 189

Monday, October 6: Browning, Bartov, and Goldhagen

Reading: Browning, pp. 191-223
Omer Bartov, "Savage War" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 8: The Red Army Before Stalingrad

Reading: Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*, ch. 4

Friday, October 10: Economics and the Soviet War Effort

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

Monday, October 13: Stalingrad, the Myth and the Reality

Viewing: *Stalingrad* (documentary), time to be arranged

Wednesday, October 15: Stalingrad, continued

Reading: Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, ch. 6
Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*, ch. 5

Friday, October 17: Economics and the Soviet Home Front

Reading: Mark Harrison, "The Soviet Union: The Defeated Victor" [Pioneerweb]
Martin Kitchen, *Nazi Germany at War*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
SECOND PAPER IS DUE IN CLASS

FALL BREAK

Monday, October 27: The Mid-Way Point in the War

Reading: Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East*, pp. 185-248 [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 29: Life under Nazi Rule

Readings: Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*, pp. 6-58 [Pioneerweb]
Wendy Lower, "Nazi Colonialism and Ukraine" [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 31: Religion and Politics under the Nazis

Readings: Berkhoff, pp. 205-252
Overy, ch. 5

Monday, November 3: The Beginning of Partisan Warfare

Readings: Kenneth Slepyan, *Stalin's Guerillas*, excerpts
Post-war documents on partisans

Wednesday, November 5: Guerrilla Warfare from the German Perspective

Readings: Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East*, pp. 1-107

Friday, November 7: The Rules of Partisan Warfare Change

Readings: Shepherd, pp. 84-165

Monday, November 10: Why did the Violence Escalate?

Readings: Shepherd, pp. 166-234
Hans-Heinrich Nolte, "Partisan War in Belorussia, 1941-1944" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 12: Kursk and Beyond

Readings: Merridale, ch. 6
Overy, ch. 7

Friday, November 14: The Fate of Prisoners of Soviet War

Readings: Christian Streit, "Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht"
[Pioneerweb]
A. G. Maslov, "I Returned from Prison," excerpts [Pioneerweb]
Order Number 270 [Pioneerweb]

Monday, November 17: The March on Berlin

Readings: Overy, ch. 8
Merridale, ch. 7

Wednesday, November 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]

Friday, November 21 **NO CLASS: WORK ON PAPERS**

Monday, November 24: Nearing the End

Readings: Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*, chs. 7-8

Wednesday, November 26: The Fall of Berlin

Readings: Merridale, ch. 9
Overy, ch. 9

THANKSGIVING

Monday, December 1: The Problem of Rape

Readings: Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin*, pp. 1-82

Wednesday, December 3: The Devastation of War

Readings: Anonymous, pp. 82-160

Friday, December 5: The Collapse of Nazi Germany

Readings: Anonymous, pp. 160-261

Monday, December 8: Contemporary Controversies on the Eastern Front

Film screening: *Der Unbekannte Soldat (The Unknown Soldier)*

Wednesday, December 10: German Memories of the Eastern Front

Readings: Omer Bartov, "Whose History is it, Anyway? The Wehrmacht and German Historiography" [Pioneerweb]
Klaus Naumann, "The 'Unblemished' Wehrmacht: The Social History of a Myth" [Pioneerweb]

Midnight, December 10: **RESEARCH PAPER IS DUE**

Friday, December 12: The Soviet Myth of World War II

Readings: Merridale, ch. 11
Overy, ch. 10 and epilogue