Overview:

This seminar will examine the most destructive conflict in human history. The Second World War spread devastation across three continents and claimed the lives of tens of millions of soldiers and civilians. It also revealed the horrors of Hiroshima and the Holocaust. But at the same time, the war turned the U.S. into a military and economic superpower. And it transformed American politics and society, with important consequences for the decades to come. Victory over Germany and Japan would not, however, lead to lasting peace. Instead, it would usher in a new era of global rivalry with the Soviet Union.

Texts:

- Stoler and Gustafson, eds., Major Problems in the History of World War II*
- David Reynolds, From Munich to Pearl Harbor*
- John Morton Blum, V Was for Victory*
- Gaddis Smith, American Diplomacy During the Second World War, 1941-1945 (2nd ed.)*
- Stephen Ambrose, Band of Brothers*
- Eugene Sledge, With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*
- John Hersey, Hiroshima*
- Elie Wiesel, Night*

All books except American Diplomacy During the Second World War are available at the College Bookstore. The * indicates that it is also on reserve in the college library. All ERes readings are available through the OWU Library homepage.

Requirements:

- Deliver two oral introductions (5 minutes) to the readings I assign (with your input). Offer opinions and identify issues. Use reviews to develop ideas. Prepare a list of questions for discussion and bring a copy for me.
- Prepare three reading essays (around 750 words) on the texts of your choice. The essays are due in class that day and should analyze – not summarize – an issue, theme, or idea that is central to the work and that you find interesting or controversial. Offer a thesis with which a reasonable person could disagree. Support personal opinions with specific references. You may not submit an essay on a reading you have to introduce. The first essay is due on or before week six. I will drop the lowest of the three grades that you receive.
- Submit a final paper of around 2000-2500 words (eight to ten typed, double-spaced pages with standard one-inch margins). Choose one of the following:
  
  Option A: Was World War II truly a “good war”? Why or why not? Define the phrase and
offer a clear thesis. Also use at least three texts and consider opposing views.

**Option B:** Compare and contrast either *With the Old Breed* and *Band of Brothers* or *Night* and *Hiroshima*. How are they similar and/or different? Which is more powerful? Why? Consider style, structure, intent, and perspective. Offer a clear thesis and coherent argument.

- Include page numbers and a title page. Use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations (e.g. Blum, p. 439) for specific facts and direct quotations. The paper (required) is due on **April 13**. The rewrite (optional) is due on **April 27**. It may enable you to raise your original grade by one letter (from a B- to an A- for example) or to a B-, whichever is higher. Please see me if you need assistance or wish to do a rewrite. Failure to submit the final paper will result in an “F” for the course.

*Substantial penalties will result from late work. Any act of plagiarism (see the OWU Catalog and the History Handbook) will lead to an “F” for the assignment and a report to the dean of academic affairs, with additional penalties possible.*

**Grading:**

- Class participation 50 percent
- Reading essays 25 percent
- Final paper 25 percent

*Regular attendance is required. Any unexcused absences will result in an “F” for the course. The oral introductions will count as part of class participation. Significant progress will receive appropriate recognition.*

**Topics and Assignments** (due that day unless otherwise announced):

1. **January 13:** *Course Introduction*
   
   Lecture: *The Road to War in Europe*

2. **January 20:** *The Origins of the European War*
   
   Discussion: Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, chapters 1-5; *Major Problems*, chapter 1; “Pearl Harbor Truly a Sneak Attack” (packet)
   
   Lecture: *The Road to War in Asia*

3. **January 27:** *The Origins of the Pacific War*
   
   Discussion: Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, chapters 6-7; *Major Problems*, chapter 8
   
   Lecture: “Why We Fight”: *Propaganda and the Public*
   
   Video: “Why We Fight” or “Pearl Harbor: Two Hours that Changed the World”

4. **February 3:** *The War at Home (I): Mobilization and Internment*
   
   Discussion: Blum, *V Was for Victory*, chapters 1, 3-5; *Major Problems*, chapter 2
   
   Lecture: *The War at Home*
February 10:
**The War at Home (II): Race, Gender, and Politics**
Discussion: Blum, *V Was for Victory*, chapters 6-8; *Major Problems*, chapters 6, 7
Lecture: *The Grand Alliance*

February 17:
**The Diplomatic Front**
Discussion: *Major Problems*, chapter 10; Smith, *American Diplomacy During the Second World War, 1941-1945*
Lecture: *The War Against Germany*

February 24:
**The War Against Germany (I)**
Discussion: *Major Problems*, chapters 3, 4; Ambrose, *Band of Brothers*, chapters 1-3; “Celluloid Soldiers” and “All Guts No Glory” (packet)
Video: “Saving Private Ryan” (opening scene)

March 2:
**The War Against Germany (II)**
Discussion: Ambrose, *Band of Brothers*, chapters 4-19
Video: “Breaking Point” (episode seven from “Band of Brothers”)

March 9:
**University Holiday**

March 16:
**The War Against Japan (I)**
Lecture: *The War Against Japan*
Discussion: *Major Problems*, chapter 5 (pp. 171-183 and 190-202); Sledge, *With the Old Breed* (Part I)

March 23:
**The War Against Japan (II)**
Discussion: *Major Problems*, chapter 5 (pp. 183-190 and 202-209); Sledge, *With the Old Breed* (Part II)
Lecture: *The Atomic Age: Hiroshima and Nagasaki*

March 30:
**The Atomic Age**
Discussion: *Major Problems*, chapter 11; Hersey, Hiroshima; “Japan Rebuffs Requests for Information” and “Holocaust Museum Sleuths” (packet)
Lecture: *The U.S. and the Holocaust*

April 6:
**The Holocaust**
Discussion: *Major Problems*, chapter 9; Wiesel, *Night*; “Wiesel’s Speech” (packet)
Video: “The Final Solution”

April 13:
**Homeward Bound**
Video: “The Best Years of Our Lives”
Due: Final papers

April 20:
**Individual Conferences**
16. April 27: **Legacies of the “Good War”**  
Discussion: Blum, *V Was For Victory*, chapter 9 and epilogue; *Major Problems*, chapter 12; assorted articles (packet, pp. 20-31)  
Due: **Optional rewrites**

*For changes and updates, please consult the ERes course page.*