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HSTA 333.01: United States Military History – World War II Seen through Modern Eyes

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HISTORY 333: U.S. MILITARY HISTORY **WORLD WAR II SEEN THROUGH MODERN EYES**

3 Semester Hours
Wednesdays, 7:10-9:50 pm
Social Science 352

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World War II was the greatest military conflict of all time. At least 60 million human beings lost their lives during or directly after the war. It shaped the world in which we now live--politically, socially, economically, and militarily. Numerous events during the last few years are the product of World War II. Obvious examples include the Berlin Wall and German unification, Swiss bankers' use of Nazi assets, divided Korea, the current Greek government demanding funds from the Germans, and the hostile reaction of the Chinese government to Japan's remembrance/celebration of that country's participation in the war. Perhaps less obvious, but very important, are the large-scale entry of women into the labor force, the racial integration of American society, and the impact of the GI Bill upon higher education.

This course will focus upon the war itself--what happened and why--but also link those events to the world we see today. There are five reasons why a reexamination of World War II as a set of historical events is more profitable now than it might have been twenty years ago. First, nearly all the major participants in the war now are deceased. While it is a significant disadvantage that we are no longer able to talk with them, it also means current discussions no longer are influenced by the sometimes-self-serving recollections of participants, particularly at the level of command. This will also afford us the opportunity to talk about how history ultimately is written and what the role of participants is (or should be) in that process.

Second, the demise of the Cold War momentarily opened new sources of information, especially those in the former Soviet Union. A prominent example is Antony Beevor's, *The Fall of Berlin, 1945*, which presented important new information on that climactic episode of the war in Europe. However, it is also true that the current leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin, is a former KGB executive and he has reversed this openness and often voices stylized Soviet-era views on the war.

Third, important revelations concerning code breaking and message interception that bear on the ultimate conduct of the war have come to light as the ULTRA and MAGIC projects have been given publicity.

Fourth, sophisticated computer software now is available that enables us to undertake

counterfactual "what if" experiments concerning the critical wartime decisions.

Fifth, using the advantage of hindsight, we now have the capability to undertake a more precise assessment of major societal/world developments that either were begun or were accentuated by the war, including rapid American industrialization, migration to California, the movement of African-Americans out of the south, racial integration, permanent increases in the proportion of women in the labor force, changing sex mores, the end of colonialism, the creation of Israel, the dawn of the Atomic Age, and the advent of the cold war.

With new sources of information and different ways of looking at events and people, there is ample reason to study World War II. In addition, and again relying upon what we now know, we can see that many events in World War II might have turned out quite differently than they did. This provides us with the ability to reevaluate the role and wisdom of most of the major military personalities in the war. Hindsight is wonderful!

In sum, there is abundant reason to take another look at World War II. We will undertake that reappraisal by reading, viewing appropriate videos, listening to both participants and experts, and, if we have time, utilizing computer simulations to undertake counterfactual historical experiments.

The Textbooks

If you are a good shopper, then you will be able to obtain paperback copies of the required books for about \$30 total.

Antony Beevor, *The Second World War* (Little Brown, 2012).

Beevor, an Englishman, is a renowned military historian. He has written highly praised books on Crete, Stalingrad, Normandy, Operation Market Garden and Berlin in 1945. He's a retired British military officer. He is an excellent writer and his books are very well researched. Beevor takes advantage of military intelligence revelations that have changed our views of how and why events occurred. Paper and used copies of this book are easily available. In mid-July, Amazon.com was selling new paperback copies for \$14.30. I have not seen any eBook versions.

Guy Sajer, *The Forgotten Soldier* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967 and lots of reprints with outlets such as Brassey's since then).

Sajer was a very young Alsatian who grew up of mixed German and French parentage. He enlisted in the *Luftwaffe* but failed its pilot tests and was assigned to a support unit on the Eastern Front. Subsequently, he volunteered for service in *Grossdeutschland*, an elite German army division that deliberately contained soldiers from all of the areas of the greater German Reich. Sajer fought for almost four years against the Russians on the eastern front. His story is regarded as the best first-person account of the utter horror experienced by the millions of combat infantrymen on both sides of the line in the former Soviet Union. I should note, however, that it is not clear that he actually was in *Grossdeutschland* at the precise times and places he said he was. We will discuss the

implications of this. Paper and used copies of this book are easily available. Mid-summer, Amazon was selling a new paperback version for \$15.92.

Reading Assignments

The most important thing you can do is to read all Beevor as quickly as possible to obtain a good overview of the war. Then, as we progress through the material, reread the appropriate chapters, as suggested below. On occasion, I will post interesting new news articles or material on Moodle and you will see that World War II continues to fascinate millions and provide reasons for discord.

You should have completed, and be ready to discuss and write about Sajer, by our class on 14 October.

The Moodle Site

There is an extensive Web Site for this class, and it is located on Moodle.

The Web Site contains the following:

- Syllabus
- Copies of the Weekly Problems
- Copy of the Final Examination Questions
- Copies of most maps and tables distributed in class
- Summary slides for most of the weekly lectures
- A World War II Time-Line
- Short Biographies on Major War Participants and Leaders
- Library citations for most books, articles mentioned in class
- Information on JVK

Other Web Sites

There are hundreds of excellent WW II web sites, though some contain propaganda and significant errors. *Caveat Emptor!* Since many of you utilize Wikipedia, let me point out that much of the material located there is excellent, but it also contains material that sometimes either is unsourced or even false.

A good place to start is the web site, Best of History Web Sites:

<http://besthistorysites.net/ww2/#sites>

Good map sites are:

<http://www.westpoint.edu/history/sitepages/wwii%20european%20theater.aspx> and <http://ww2db.com/reference/map>. A simple, straightforward site with good maps is “42 Maps That Explain World War II,” www.vox.com/2014/11/13/7148855/40-maps-that-explain-world-war-ii

World War II documents made be found at:

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/wwii.asp

If you are interested in specific web sites that pertain to particular countries or battles, search on your own, or see me. Hundreds of excellent sites exist, but once again, do not accept as fact everything you find on WW II web sites.

Examinations and Problems

On any week when there is not a mid-term exam, you must do a written problem that will be due the next class period. **Your answer may not exceed two typed pages, single-spaced.** You will do ten of these during the semester. All ten, taken together, will account for 25 percent of your final grade. I will discard your lowest score before computing your average on these questions. Hence, I will be using only your highest nine scores. This will allow you to miss a class, or mess up, once. Among the beneficial effects of the questions are that they require you to come to grips with specific important material, think critically, and write coherently.

We will have two midterm examinations and a final examination. The first midterm is scheduled for 6 October and will cover Sections 1-5. The second midterm will occur on 17 November and will cover Sections 7-11. Each separate midterm examination will account for 25 percent of your final grade. **Please bring a blue book (or equivalent) to the midterm exams.**

In contrast to the two midterm examinations, **the final examination is open book, open notes.** The final examination questions already are posted on Moodle. I will select three or four questions from this list for the final examination. No other questions will be asked. You are encouraged to spend exorbitant amounts of time studying and preparing answers to these questions, and you may work in groups with other students, and collude and conspire, to do so. However, once you enter the classroom for the final examination, all collusion with other students must end. You may bring any materials you wish to the final examination, including semi-prepared or fully prepared answers and microcomputers. If this class imitates the behavior of other classes, then it is likely that most students will spend more time preparing for this final examination than almost any other. The final examination accounts for 25 percent of your final grade.

You will not be graded on your class participation except to "tip" you from one grade to the next if it turns out you are on the borderline. I do give + and – grades.

Grade Determination

Problems	25 percent
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Midterm I	25 percent
Midterm II	25 percent
Final Examination	25 percent

Note that I will average the letter grade you receive on each of these four course segments in order to arrive at your final grade. Because the means and standard deviations of grades assigned on the exams differ, the points you are assigned on one examination are non-comparable to the points you receive on another examination, on the problems, or on the final examination. **This is not high school. I do not grade on a 90 to 100 = A, 80 to 90 = B, etc., basis. Your final point total, then, does not determine your grade because points earned on one exam cannot be equated to points earned on a different exam. Your letter grades determine your final grade.** I do assign + and – grades.

Important Dates

First Class Day	19 August
Midterm I	7 October
Midterm II	4 November
Final Examination	25 November

Some Ground Rules

You are responsible for everything that is covered in every class, whether or not you attend. However, though class attendance is not required, you must hand in your writing assignments to me by 7:10 p.m. on the day they are due.

Do everything in your power to avoid missing either a scheduled examination or the due date for a problem/writing assignment. If you find that you must miss the examination, or wish to turn a writing assignment in late, then please e-mail me, or call me beforehand to state your case. There may be a penalty, but I can be convinced. However, ordinarily you will need some evidence, for example, a doctor's statement or a connectable obituary. Use e-mail whenever possible to alert me if you have a problem.

You may feel free to call me at my home to discuss any matter relating to the course. In addition, I encourage you to utilize e-mail at any time to talk with me. It's a great way to stay in contact and you may submit your weekly problems via e-mail if you are unable to attend class (but don't make this a habit and don't submit your answer as an attachment). The time on the e-mail must be prior to the beginning of our class session, as ordinarily we will discuss each problem at the beginning of the class in which it is due.

Please turn off all cell phones, I-Pods, etc. (and all other communications devices) when you enter the classroom. Active cell phones and other electronic devices disrupt the class and exhibit disrespect both for other students and for the professor. **The first time your cell phone or other technology sounds off during the class, I will throw you out of that session. The second time,**

you're out of the class forever with an F. Alas, the same thing will happen to you if you are detected conspicuously sending or receiving e-mail, Twittering, or using Facebook, etc., during class time. These rules do not apply to any "breaks" we take during the class, or to times before or after class.

When you write an examination in class, you may not use any electrical devices or technology to assist you. That is, you may not use a computer, cell phone, I-Pad, or any other similar device. Further, you may not use any books or notes during the examinations. (The final examination is an exception---see above.)

HAVING SAID THE ABOVE, COVID-19 MAY CHANGE EVERYTHING. IF SO, WE WILL MAKE ADJUSTMENTS, E.G., "ZOOMING" SOME CLASS LECTURES, ETC.

Research and Citations

You commit a serious violation of the academic policies of the University of Montana if you plagiarize information or sources (i.e., do not provide appropriate citation for the work of others that you have used). When you write for me, I will assume your thoughts are your own. If not, then you must cite your sources---which is an excellent idea in any case if you want to buttress your case. The Internet is a wonderful tool; however, if you quote from it or any outside source, then you must provide me with a searchable citation that shows the source of your material. Failure to do so will result in your receiving an F for the course. Take this obligation seriously.

Office Hours, Etc.

TH 2-4 p.m. and by appointment. My "office" will be the ground floor of the UC. I will appear there if you need to meet me, so don't hesitate to schedule a time. Finally, do not hesitate to call me or to e-mail me if you need assistance.

1) 19 August

Read: Beevor, Chap. 1

Video: A New Germany

About the Course

Trivia Test

The Prewar Situation in Europe: economic, political, social, geographic

Adolf Hitler, the Nazis and Pre-war Europe

2) 26 August

Problem I due (all Problems may be found on Moodle)

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 4, 16, 17

Prewar Situation in the Pacific
Japanese Expansion Prior to Pearl Harbor
Pearl Harbor
Pearl Harbor to Midway
Intensive Examination of Battle of Midway

3) **2 September**

Problem II due

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8

German Expansion in Western Europe Prior to the Invasion of the Soviet Union (i.e., Poland, Scandinavia, Low Countries, France)

U-Boat Warfare in the Atlantic

4) **9 September**

Problem III due

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 9, 11, 21, 25, 27, 29, 32, 35

Greece, Crete, North Africa I
German Invasion of the USSR: I

5) **16 September**

Problem IV due

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 12, 13, 15, 22, 24
Video: Barbarossa

German Invasion of the Soviet Union: II
Battle of Moscow
Intensive Examination of the Battle of Stalingrad

6) **23 September**

Problem V Due

The Home Fronts
War Economics
Role of Women
Role of African-Americans
North Africa II
Italy

7) **30 September**

Problem VI due

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 11, 14, 21, 26, 28, 35

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 29, 46, 50

Air War in Europe
Pacific Air War

8) **7 October**

EXAMINATION ONE OCCURS DURING THIS CLASS AND WILL COVER SECTIONS (1) THROUGH (6). NO BOOKS, NO NOTES, NO ELECTRONICS. THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA HONOR CODE APPLIES.

9) **14 October**

Problem VII due

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 29, 30, 37, 41, 45

Island Hopping in the Pacific
Submarine Warfare in the Pacific

Kharkov and Germany Recovery in the East
Kursk

Discuss Guy Sajer, *The Forgotten Soldier*

10) 21 October

Problem VIII due

Read: Beevor, Chaps. 13, 19, 27, 28, 34, 36, 39

Holocaust in Europe, Atrocities in Asia
German and Japanese Occupations
Resistance and Guerrilla Warfare

Codebreaking and Intelligence
Ultra and Magic
Evaluating Combat Effectiveness

11) 28 October

Problem IX due

Read: Beevor, Chap. 28, 39, 42, 44, 44, 46

Destruction of Army Group Center
Germany Retreats to its 1939 Borders

Normandy
Market Garden

12) 4 November

Read: Beevor, Chaps., 47, 48, 49, 50

Battle of the Bulge
Finis in Europe and the Battle of Berlin
European Occupation and Changed Borders

EXAMINATION TWO WILL OCCUR DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THIS CLASS BUT COVERS ONLY SECTIONS (7) THROUGH (11). NO BOOKS, NO NOTES, NO ELECTRONICS. THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA HONOR CODE APPLIES.

13) 11 November

No Class: Veterans Day

Problem X Due via E-Mail

14) 18 November

Final Island Battles in the Pacific
Atomic Bomb

Winners and Losers in World War II
What difference did the war make?

Some Historiography

15) 25 November

FINAL EXAMINATION. QUESTIONS WILL BE CHOSEN FROM THE LIST ALREADY POSTED ON MOODLE. THIS IS AN OPEN BOOK, OPEN NOTES EXAMINATION. ELECTRONICS AND BOOKS PERMITTED. YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO PREPARE YOUR ANSWERS AHEAD OF TIME AND BRING THEM WITH YOU, ALONG WITH ANY OTHER MATERIALS YOU WISH. YOU MAY WORK WITH OTHERS AND SUBMIT IDENTICAL ANSWERS. NOTE WELL, HOWEVER, THAT IF YOU ALL SUBMIT A MEDIOCRE ANSWER, THEN YOU'LL ALL RECEIVE A MEDIOCRE GRADE. BECAUSE YOU HAVE THE QUESTIONS AHEAD OF TIME, MY EXPECTATIONS ARE SUBSTANTIAL.