

History 2177B
The Two World Wars
Winter 2026

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Office Hours: **By Appointment**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

History 2177B, an online asynchronous course, offers a comparative study of the First and Second World Wars, including their causes and consequences. The course revolves around a series of key themes such as military operations and strategy, the social and cultural impact of modern warfare, imperialism and colonialism, leadership and command, technology and logistics, and the evolution of collective/public memory during and after the World Wars.

Antirequisite(s): History 2179

Course Syllabus

The First World War incorporated modern machine technologies to an unprecedented degree, on the battlefields, and in supporting roles on the home fronts. Nations participated in the effort at great cost in lives and material wealth. The war destroyed four empires and fostered several new nation states.

The Second World War remains unparalleled in modern history for its intensity of violence and geographical scope. Combat on land, at sea, and in the air ranged from every corner of Europe to the heart of the Soviet Union, and from the jungles of Burma to the Aleutian Island chain in Alaska. Tens of millions of people served in uniform – many millions more supported their efforts on the home fronts. By the summer of 1945, military and civilian fatalities were counted in the tens of millions. Centuries of cultural heritage lay in ruins. The stage was set for a new Cold War and a series of wars of decolonization that dominated geo-politics throughout the second half of the twentieth century and even up to our own day.

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Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify and explain the significance of key personalities, campaigns, and technologies from the First and Second World Wars
- analyze and compare national and military strategic decisions of various belligerent nations in both World Wars
- identify and assess salient controversies and debates in the scholarship on the World Wars
- explain the 'total' and global character of the World Wars, as well as their legacies

Course Structure

This course operates in a distance learning format (online, asynchronous). There are no scheduled in-person classes or in-person assessments. It will be taught through the OWL Brightspace course platform, which contains all course materials (except for the required textbooks), including: weekly recorded voice-over slide lecture presentations; any additional assigned readings or reference materials; the complete syllabus and examination guidelines; announcements and calendar entries; mid-term tests and final examinations, and the gradebook.

Students may reach the instructor at any time via e-mail, and where helpful, we may also communicate over Zoom at mutually convenient times.

This course runs for thirteen weeks, with one unit (two lecture topics) per week. It is imperative to keep up with the weekly recorded lectures and course reading material. Doing so will reduce the workload when preparing for the tests and final exams.

Students who truly wish to succeed in this course must be prepared to invest sufficient time in reading and analyzing the course textbooks and other weekly materials – three to four hours per lecture topic, per week, on average, would be a reasonable amount of time to budget.

The textbooks are designed as surveys; they offer a wide range of information, but only in limited depth. As such, they must be used in conjunction with the lecture content.

Methods of Evaluation

Tests and examinations in this course will be delivered online through the OWL Brightspace platform, in unproctored/take-home format. The tests/exams will typically be available to students for periods of approximately six hours, but once opened, they must be completed within a specified time frame (approximately 45 to 120 minutes, depending upon the number of questions involved). The tests/exams may include true/false, multiple choice, multiple selection, and/or short answer-type questions. The final examination is cumulative; it covers material from the entire course.

Mid-term Test #1: 20% (date TBD)

Mid-term Test #2: 35% (date TBD)

Final Examination: 45% (date TBD)

Undocumented absences are not permitted for Mid-term Test #1 or the Final Exam.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Students must complete both of the mid-term tests and the final examination in order to pass the course.

Course Materials

(Tentative booklist at this time, book costs to be added once textbook titles confirmed)

There will likely be two required textbooks for this course:

Hew Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

R.A.C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Course Schedule and Readings

Details to follow.

Additional Statements

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.