

**History 2177B**  
**The Two World Wars**  
**Summer 2026**

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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 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 architectural and cultural heritage lay in ruins. The stage was set for a new Cold War and the wars of decolonization that were to dominate geo-politics throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

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

**This course runs for six weeks, with two units (four 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 exams. Effective time management is crucial.**

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 – two to three hours per lecture topic, 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 will typically be available to students for periods of approximately six to twelve hours, but once opened, they must be completed within a specified time frame (ranging from 45 to 120 minutes, depending upon the number of questions involved). The tests/exams may include true/false, multiple choice, multiple selection, and/or brief written response-type questions.

### **Exams:**

Mid-term Test #1: 20% (29 June, covers Weeks 1 and 2 only)

Mid-term Test #2: 35% (13 July, covers Weeks 3 and 4 only)

Final Examination: 45% (date TBD, cumulative for the entire course)

The final examination is cumulative; it covers material from the entire course.

### **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](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

There are two required textbooks for this course:

Hew Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford University Press, 2014). (\$13.25 print; \$11.00 eBook 180-day rental)

R.A.C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). (\$30.60 print; \$16.00 eBook 180-day rental)

## **Course Schedule and Readings**

### Week 1, 15 June

#### **Unit 1:**

Course Introduction; Studying the World Wars  
Origins of the World Wars

Readings: Strachan, Introduction, Ch. 1  
Parker, Ch. 1

#### **Unit 2:**

Seeking Decisive Battle, 1914 and 1940  
'Miracles'

Readings: Strachan, pp. 33-38, 48-55  
Parker, Chs. 2, 3

### Week 2, 22 June

#### **Unit 1:**

The Last Frontier: The Wars in the East  
Total War

Readings: Strachan, pp. 38-47, 56-62, Chs. 5, 10, 11  
Parker, Chs. 4, 9, 11, pp. 106-114

#### **Unit 2:**

Coalition Warfare  
Leadership and Command

Readings: Strachan, Chs. 4, 14  
Parker, Chs. 8, 15

Week 3, 29 June

**Mid-term Test #1 (29 June, online)**

**Unit 1:**

Strategic Air Power  
Submarine Warfare

Readings: Strachan, Chs. 8, 9, 20,  
Parker, Ch. 10, pp. 95-98

**Unit 2:**

Empires at War  
Fighting on the Peripheries

Readings: Strachan, Chs. 6, 7  
Parker, pp. 98-106

Week 4: 6 July

**Unit 1:**

Imperial Japan and the Asia Pacific War  
Amphibious Warfare

Readings: Parker, Chs. 5, 6, 12

**Unit 2:**

Attritional Warfare, 1916-17  
Normandy to the Rhine, 1944-45

Readings: Strachan, Ch. 13  
Parker, Ch. 13

Week 5: 13 July**Mid-term Test #2 (13 July, online)****Unit 1:**

Genocide

Occupation and Resistance: A Morality Study

Readings: Strachan, Ch. 6 (review)

Parker, Ch. 17

**Unit 2:**

Defeating Germany, 1917-18 and 1944-45

Defeating Imperial Japan

Readings: Strachan, Chs. 18, 19, 21

Parker, Ch. 14, 22

Week 6: 20 July**Unit 1:**

Restoring Peace, 1918 and 1945

Legacies of Total War

Readings: Strachan, Chs. 23, 24

Parker, Chs. 16, 18

**Additional Statements**

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

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](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.