

Statement of Rationale
GE Category: Thinking Historically
Course: World War II
Instructor: Kenneth Kihlstrom/Gabriel Fawcett

Student Learning Outcome: **“Students will be able to analyze historical sources with appropriate attention to their various contexts”**

Students in this course will both learn history on site (Churchill War Rooms, Normandy Beaches, Auschwitz, etc.); in museums (Imperial War Museum, various Holocaust Museums, Dutch resistance museum, etc.); through primary historical source readings (speeches by Churchill, Hitler; writings such as Wannsee Protocol, Versailles Treaty, Plans for D-Day Invasion) and secondary sources (primary textbook is “Why the Allies Won” by Richard Overy but they will be exposed to a wide range of historical analysis. The ability to stand in historical places versus reading about the is the primary distinctive of learning in Europe versus at Westmont. Gabriel Fawcett is an Oxford trained historian with particular expertise on the Holocaust.

Certification Criteria:

The students will be presenting their learning in a variety of forms including a timeline of the war (including prior and subsequent relevant events), group presentations on the various countries we will travel in and their role in the war (civilian and military); shorter essays on topics of particular interest to each student as well as two major papers, one of which must focus on primary sources with particular focus on issues such as genre and circumstances that might play a role in its reliability/usefulness as a historical source.

Students will be able to

1. Read primary sources historically – asking and answering basic questions about historical sources (historical context, author, audience, genre); drawing historical conclusions from the sources and assessing their reliability and usefulness; and reflecting on how their own background shapes their interpretation;

As noted above, one of the major papers must focus on primary sources, addressing these issues. The Holocaust will be a central issue in the course with visits to multiple Holocaust museums, camps at Sachsenhausen, Theresienstadt, and Auschwitz. There will be primary remembrances of camp survivors and guards as well as secondary writings.

2. Identify the arguments of secondary sources and recognize differences in interpretation.

While as noted in the syllabus, the papers will focus more on analysis which the essays more on information, in both cases the students will need to recognize the point of view of the writers and how that might affect the information presented. Is skepticism warranted? Do parallel sources challenge assumptions? As groups work together on country reports do different points of view emerge?

3. Articulate responsibly how the past is relevant for the present, drawing informed connections between their study of past events and their bearing on the present.

Though World War II finished almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a century ago the imprint remains with us now with the atomic age, the formation of a Jewish State in the middle east, the cold war which has evolved over time but never totally absent. The scars remain across Europe to this day and the issues of how we treat others not like us continue to be front and center.