

## **HIS389Y0: Britain at War, 1914-1945**

Prof. Timothy Andrews Sayle

### Course Description:

How did Great Britain make war, and how did war make Great Britain?

This course offers an immersive exploration into Britain's wartime history during the First and Second World Wars.

We will study the war through three overlapping frameworks: 1) the British role in these international conflicts, drawing especially on historiographical debates that problematize and question particular strategic decisions; 2) the experience of war both for combatants and for civilian adults and children in the United Kingdom, including the broader social and political change engendered by the war; and 3) the relationship between war and empire, including movement towards decolonization and independence.

In addition to classroom discussion, readings, and written assignments, you will engage with history firsthand through field trips that allow us to see and feel parts of the war's history, and to reconsider and challenge popular myths of the war.

### **Field Trip Sites:**

1. Imperial War Museum (London) and HMS *Belfast*.
2. Bletchley Park, *home of the Second World War codebreakers* and the Imperial War Museum (Duxford), *an airbase from the Battle of Britain*.
3. Imperial War Museum North (Manchester) and the Western Approaches Museum (Liverpool).
4. Cabinet War Rooms (London) and The Mall *and adjacent areas, including the Cenotaph, the RAF Bomber Command Memorial, and other monuments to the First and Second World War*.
5. Various sites in Oxford.

### **Week 1**

#### Monday

- Classroom Topic: Britain and War before 1914

#### Tuesday

- Field Trip to the Imperial War Museum (London) and HMS Belfast

#### Wednesday

- Classroom Topic: Fighting the First World War

#### Thursday

- Classroom Topic: The Empire at War

## **Week 2**

### Monday

- Classroom Topic: Remembering the First World War (Site visit: Commemoration in Oxford – monuments)

### Tuesday

- Field Trip to Bletchley Park and Imperial War Museum (Duxford)

### Wednesday

- Classroom Topic: In Between the Wars

### Thursday

- Classroom Topic: Appeasement (Site visit: Oxford Union debate location)

## **Week 3**

### Monday

- Classroom Topic: Fighting “Alone”? (Battle of Britain, Empire, etc.)

### Tuesday

- Field Trip to Imperial War Museum North (Manchester)

### Wednesday

- Field Trip to the Western Approaches Museum (Liverpool)

### Thursday

- Classroom Topic: Fighting as a Member of the Grand Alliance

## **Week 4**

### Monday

- Classroom Topic: The “Home Front”

### Tuesday

- Field Trip to the Cabinet War Rooms and a walking tour of The Mall and surrounding areas

### Wednesday

- Classroom Topic: Victory and Memory (Site visit: Commemoration in Oxford – monuments)

### Thursday

- Final Reflection (in-class assignment).

**Assignments:**

20% Participation.

- *Attendance in class is mandatory, but attendance does not constitute participation. Participation includes active and accurate discussion, as well as other tasks from time to time. This might include presenting information individually or as part of a group. We will discuss on the first day.*

20% Britain at War context paper (1000 words maximum).

- *This is a short paper that will be due before the class begins. Instructions and necessary reading will be provided well ahead of the class start date.*

30% (15% x 2) Two short response papers (500 words maximum, each).

- *I will pose several prompts or questions during the course, and you will choose to respond to two of these prompts, each worth 15%. Prompts will include options to reflect on an aspect of the history we have read about or to write about one of our field trips.*

30% Final Reflection.

- *Preparation for this reflection will be accomplished by your course reading and your participation and attendance in class.*