

Dear folks,

Welcome to the new semester for HIST 242 – The United States and World War II!

! I want to remind you of your responsibilities. Make sure that you start by reading the "Getting Started" section. Most of your questions will be answered by doing so. Please watch this Announcements page for the most current information on course matters.

Next, make sure that you complete all of your assignments in a timely fashion. For Week 1, those assignments include your Introduction, your Week 1 Critical Thinking exercise, and your Week 1 Discussion Board assignment. Please note: **when responding to an assignment in the class YOU MUST CITE YOUR SOURCES!** If you do not, the assignment is considered plagiarized and you will not receive credit for your work. See below for an explanation of why citing sources is so important and why we don't cite general-interest encyclopedias (especially Wikipedia).

You'll notice that there are three books and a video on two DVDs assigned for this course. Because this is an upper-level history course, you need to be familiar with how historians interpret World War II and what the most recent interpretations are. Unfortunately, there isn't one book that will give all this information. Instead, you'll need to divide the reading between the three books and the video for the course. Each of the sources is important (and necessary) in its own way.

First is your narrative text: **William L. O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993. ISBN: 0-674-19737-2.** It tells the basic story of the United States' participation in World War II from 1941 (and, although the book starts with a dramatic account of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December, O'Neill quickly goes back to cover the events that led up to that attack) through victory over Japan in August of 1945. It's a good read (it's considered a classic) and it will outline the events for you. If you have trouble understanding the events or putting them in chronological order, this is the book to turn to.

There's also a sources text: **Mark Stoler and Melanie Gustafson, eds., *Major Problems in the History of World War II*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton-Mifflin, 2003. ISBN: 978-0-618-06132-7.** This is your "sources" text. It contains primary source documents (statements by President Roosevelt and Charles Lindbergh on the causes of the war, debates by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the strategy for winning the war, and much more), as well as important essays by historians on topics of concern. Many of your assignments will be drawn from the material in this book.

Then, there's what historians call a monograph (an in-depth study of a particular event): **Robert S. Burrell, *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima*. College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2006. ISBN: 978-1-58544-483-0.** This is a study of one of the iconic battles of World War II: the struggle by the US Marine Corps to take a small island near Japan to use as an airbase for fighter escorts to protect bombing raids on Japan. 80,000 Marines attacked Iwo Jima in February of 1945. By the time the island fell to the US assault, 28,000 of them had been killed or injured. Burrell, who is himself a Marine Corps veteran, suggests that the attack on Iwo was unnecessary and was launched mainly for reasons of interservice rivalries than to further the war effort.

Finally, there are the DVDs: ***Iwo Jima: 36 Days of Hell*. Eugene, Ore.: Timeless Media Group, 2007.** World War II provides us with a unique record of film and photographic images that can give us a new perspective on events.

It's important that you read all the books and watch the videos in order to fully understand the War and why it played out the way it did. The Critical Thinking assignments (and, to some extent, the Discussion Board

assignments) are meant to tell me that you've completed the reading and that you understood it. That's why I want you to use those sources when answering the assignments--unless I tell you otherwise.

When you're ready to submit your Critical Thinking essay, please use the Assignments tab on the left-hand margin of the page. That will allow you to submit your response online. **Please don't email your essay to me unless you absolutely have to.** The Assignments tab allows me to track your assignments more easily and will help (I hope) keep me from being inundated with email.

Again, I can't overemphasize the importance of citing your sources each and every time you hand in your assignments. Citing sources is what makes us historians--it shows how we based the assertions we're making on the sources we've consulted. It's vital that you cite the sources you use to answer the questions. If you choose to quote from the sources, you must place the text you use in quotation marks AND indicate the page from which the text was taken. **For this course we use the APA stylesheet**, because it has only a minimal amount of special formatting and therefore can be uploaded with little or no changes.

A short discourse on plagiarism--and why not to do it. Plagiarism is using another person's work without acknowledgment. This means that any attempt to represent someone else's work as your own counts as plagiarism, whether you intended to plagiarize or not. It includes, but is not limited to,

- Copying material from the textbook or any other source without placing the copied material in quotation marks and identifying the source it came from;
- Copying material from any Internet source without placing the copied material in quotation marks and identifying the source it came from; and
- Using ideas or concepts from another source without identifying and crediting that source appropriately.

As you can see, plagiarism is a pretty broad category. It's easy to plagiarize unintentionally, simply by forgetting to note your sources. For this reason, I will most often have you rewrite and resubmit assignments that I determine have been plagiarized. It will be a lot easier on both of us if you're careful to use quotation marks where appropriate and to cite and attribute your sources in everything you submit.

The real reason not to plagiarize, however, is because it defeats the whole point in offering the class in the first place. My job is to teach you how to think critically about the sources you're reading, how to draw conclusions about the things you've read, and how to formulate your own ideas based on the understanding you've gained in your reading. In addition to being a form of intellectual theft, plagiarism avoids the critical-thinking process altogether. A plagiarized paper shows that you haven't learned anything.

How to cite sources (and why we don't cite Wikipedia) Different disciplines use different ways of citing sources. The four most common methods of citing (or stylesheets) are the APA (American Psychological Association), the MLA (Modern Language Association), the AMA (American Medical Association) and Chicago (University of Chicago Press). Many college courses use Kate Turabian's book *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. For this course, I'm asking that you use the APA format, because it's formatting is easy to use when submitting electronic files.

You can see different examples of how these stylesheets work at the following Web site:
<http://langsdaledu.ubalt.edu/howto/apastyle.htm>.

Why am I asking you to do this? The short answer is because this is a history class, and history is a discipline. The thing that makes us historians (as opposed to historical reenactors, family genealogists, and those people who

show up on *Antiques Roadshow*) is that we follow a discipline: a set of rules that let us understand the past in an ordered fashion. To really act as a historian, you need to document your sources so that people who read your analysis can reconstruct your thinking based on the sources you used. Without that step, you might as well be making things up—and historians don't do that.

When you cite a source, what you're saying (in effect) is, "This is the place where I got my information. I believe that it's accurate and reliable, and that it's been as careful as I've been to follow the historical method. Therefore, it presents an accurate view of a historical event, person, or situation."

In fact, what you're doing by citing a source is appealing to an authority. The authority may be a person who lived at the time of the events you're researching (a primary source) or who was actually present at the events (a very good primary source), or the work of a historian who has considered primary and secondary sources, put them in context, and presented his or her ideas to other scholars, soliciting their comments and criticism. That's the problem with citing sources like Answers.com, WikiAnswers, or any other general-interest encyclopedia, online or not. We can't tell if these essays are written by experts who are knowledgeable in their area. Their work isn't peer-reviewed, and we have no idea if they've followed the historical method or not. The problem with Wikipedia in particular is that it's not trustworthy. It doesn't follow the historical method, and we shouldn't be citing it in a historical paper.

Now, it's not anyone's *fault* that Wikipedia's not trustworthy—it's the way the encyclopedia is set up. Wikipedia is designed so that anyone can edit it, and that makes it a very comprehensive resource. But since everyone can edit it, that means that no one has control over the content—and that in turn means that individuals can change or select the facts to represent their own point of view.

Spinning Wikipedia articles is actually a fairly common practice. A recent story, aired on National Public Radio's Morning Edition, told about the advent of a new online scanning tool that tells you the location of computers that were used to change Wikipedia articles. "If you follow the IP address trail," the Morning Edition writer stated, "you'll see that often the editors of an entry are 'interested parties,' not just encyclopedia nerds who want to make sure the facts are straight."

Examples abound. For instance, someone using a computer at the headquarters of Diebold Election Systems, a company that makes voting machines, deleted fifteen paragraphs from its Wikipedia entry. The paragraphs told about concerns over the security of the machines made by the company and about its CEO's fundraising for President Bush in 2003. According to an article in the online magazine *Wired.com*, people using computers at Wal-Mart, the CIA, and at former Montana Senator Conrad Burns's office changed Wikipedia entries associated with their interests, spinning the text so that they appeared in the best possible light.

That's why we don't cite Wikipedia—we have no clue if the views that are being reflected in the entries are the truth, or simply what someone wants us to believe.

To conclude: please don't cite encyclopedia articles when composing your Critical Thinking essays. The information you need to finish the assignments can be found in your texts and in the recommended reading for the week. The essays are meant to show that you've read and understand the readings; if you just pull the information from the encyclopedia, you haven't shown me that you've done the readings.

If you need to communicate with me, I will hold virtual office hours in this course's Chatroom on Sundays between 7 and 8 PM. You can also email me with any questions; usually I access the course on Wednesdays and Sundays, but I will respond to your questions by the following Sunday evening.

It is always a little hectic at the beginning of the semester, so if you run into serious problems make sure to email me: kshepherd@henryford.ucompass.com. Now, let's get to work!

Ken Shepherd