

Course Descriptions, Fall Term 2018

World War II: Its Four Most Important Battles and Their Consequences.

World War II is one of the defining events of modern American history. 16 million men and women were under arms for the US, and yet, we were not as heavily involved as others, testament to the truly worldwide scope of the conflict. This course will highlight four of the most significant military operations of the war: 1) Pearl Harbor; 2) Stalingrad; 3) The Battle of the Bulge; and 4) The dropping of the atom bomb. Each session will offer background and context for the countries involved, the military operation itself, and the events and personalities of the operation. The course will thus provide an overview of the causes, technology, and results of the greatest conflict in human history.

Instructor/Organizer: Hamish Lutris. Mondays 10:00 AM – Noon at Geer Village, September 24 - October 15 (4 sessions)

Exiles in Paradise: Following the Russian Revolution, World War I, and the Treaty of Versailles, Europe went through a period of political and economic turmoil as well as an extraordinarily vital artistic explosion. With the rise of the Soviet Union and Fascism many playwrights, composers, writers, and directors (among them Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill, Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Marlene Dietrich, and Peter Lorre) escaped Europe. Many landed in New York and Hollywood, changing forever the performing arts in the United States. The classes will include audio and video examples of their work in Europe and in the United States.

Instructor/Organizer: Thomas Gruenewald. Mondays 1:00 – 3:00 PM at Geer Village, September 17 – November 5 (8 sessions)

American Exceptionalism: A consistent theme throughout American history is the idea that this nation and its people are somehow exceptional, set apart, unique. This idea has deep religious roots, going back to the Puritans, and is often connected to the thought that the nation has a special purpose in God's plan. It has taken many forms and has its own non-religious, secular expression as well. This class will trace the exceptionalism idea from the beginning to the present time, offering thoughts about its positive possibilities and problematic aspects.

Instructor/Organizer: Richard Reifsnnyder, Tuesdays 10:00 AM – Noon at Noble Horizons, September 18 – October 23 (6 sessions)

The Roberts Court, 2016 - 2017. The past term of the United States Supreme Court will be remembered as one of the most significant and pivotal terms in recent history. The opinions handed down prior to and in June reveal the effect of Justice Gorsuch's presence on the bench. Predicted to feature "blockbuster decisions", the Roberts Court did not fail in that respect.

Instructor/Organizer: Larry Rand. Tuesdays 1:00 – 3:00 PM at Noble Horizons Learning Center, September 18– October 30 (7 sessions)

Play Reading. This fall we will read works by a contemporary woman playwright, Sarah Ruhl, who is an [American](#) playwright, professor, and essayist. Two of her plays have been finalists for the [Pulitzer Prize for Drama](#) and she received a nomination for [Tony Award for Best Play](#). Her most recent play, For Peter Pan on her 70th Birthday (2017), premiered Off-Broadway at [Playwrights Horizons](#). She currently serves on the faculty of the [Yale School of Drama](#). Participants are asked to obtain *The Clean House* and other plays by Sarah Ruhl. Used books are available from Amazon. The site is:

https://www.amazon.com/Clean-House-Other-Plays/dp/1559362669/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1525280073&sr=1-1&keywords=the+clean+house+and+other+plays

Instructor/Organizer: Rosemary Farnsworth. Wednesdays 10:00 – 12:00, at Noble Horizons Learning Center, September 19-November 7 (8 sessions)

Clash of Civilizations: The Disuniting of America and Reflections on a Multicultural Society; Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity; The Rise of Identity Studies and the Closing of the Liberal Mind; and the Suicide of the West. Will a continent-spanning, multicultural nation like the USA-- that encourages its citizens to value their respective cultural differences on a par with or more important than some strong unifying characteristic--, survive or break apart? Will the United States of America Go the Way of All Great Nations/Empires of History?

Instructor/Organizer: Jeffrey Fillman. Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:00 PM at Geer Village, September 19 – October 24 (6 sessions)

Great Decisions: The 60th year of an international discussion program produced by the Foreign Policy Association and conducted in over 500 cities around the world. This year's topics include: Waning of the Pax Americana? Russia's foreign policy; China's geopolitics; Media and foreign policy; Turkey: partner in crisis; U.S. global engagement & the military; South Africa's fragile democracy; and Global health issues. This course continues a partnership with students and faculty from Housatonic Valley Regional High School. All registrants should order the 2018 briefing book (\$25) by phone (1-800.477.5836) or online at fpa.org (click on Great Decisions and select order).

Instructors/Organizers: Richard Collins, Tracy Atwood, and John Lizzi. Thursdays 10 - Noon at Geer Village, September 20 - November 15 (9 sessions)

Marginalized Americans: Black Americans, 1954-2018 In this, the last episode of the *Marginalized Americans* documentary film course, we will examine efforts of American blacks to gain equal rights and treatment. Our documentary films will be “Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years: 1954-1965” and “And I Still Rise: Black America Since MLK”.

Instructor/Organizer: Larry Rand. Thursdays, 1:00 - 3:00 PM at Noble Horizons Learning Center, September 20 – November 8 (8 sessions)

The Soul of America The good old days were not as good as we think. Starting at our founding, America has been full of conflicts between our ideals and the realities of events of which we cannot be proud. ... slavery, racism, Indian genocide, suppression of women, religious bigotry, and denial of civil rights to minorities. And that’s not a complete list.

Often our leaders were asleep at the switch, but sometimes at critical moments, great leadership inspired us to look towards our better angels.

The book “The Soul of America” by Jon Meacham is a good place for you to get started. Otherwise you’ll just have to accept your instructor’s views as gospel.

Instructor/Organizer: Jerry Jamin. Fridays, 10:00 – Noon at Geer Village, September 21 – October 26 (6 sessions)