Cathedral Catholic High School
Course Catalog

Course Title: History of World War II

Course Description: With over 60 nations involved and resulting in the deaths of more than 60 million people, no other war in the history of the world can be considered to be as catastrophic as the Second World War. This course will provide a chronological, in-depth look at how this war begins and progresses, and students will observe how simultaneous events occurring on all fronts make this war a truly global conflict. Finally, students will gain further understanding of this cataclysmic event and respect for a generation of young men and women around the world that preserved freedom and changed the world forever.

Course #: 1637

UC/CSU Approval: “g” approved

Grade Level: 11-12

Estimated Homework Per Week: Limited reading; 0 - 60 minutes per week

Prerequisite: none

Recommended Prerequisite Skills: Map reading skills, Analyzing historical sources and evidence, cause/effect, motivated to learn about WWII

Course Grade Scale:

- Tests and Quizzes 35%
- Homework and Classwork 30%
- Group Projects 20%
- Final Project 15%

Major Assessments/Units/Topics: There will be a Unit Test or Project for Units 1-6 below and short reading quizzes from the text. There will be a Final Project for the class that will include topics from Unit 7 and Unit 8.

Unit 1: The Seeds of War and Fascist Aggression

One cannot understand how World War II began without understanding how World War I ended. Students will be given historical background on the end of World War I and how postwar conditions in these nations led to the rise of fascist dictators. Students will attain an understanding of how pre-war
policies allowed for this to happen, which eventually led to the invasion of Poland and the formal outbreak of World War II.

**Unit 2: Axis Domination**

War has formally broken over the European continent, and this unit will begin after the conquest of Poland and will follow the German push through Scandinavia, the lowlands of the Netherlands and Belgium, and onto the fall of Paris. Students will examine each major battle, analyze the pros and cons of military engagement in each area, and discuss tactical strategies employed by each side.

**Unit 3: US Entry into War**

As the Japanese move into Southeast Asia, the Americans have been pushed to the edge of war. Students will not only learn about these events, but also will gain some insight upon the mindset of the Japanese, and how honor, pride, and servitude to the emperor is of utmost importance, thus understanding how the Pacific theatre of the war progressed in such a cataclysmic fashion. In America, isolationist sentiment reigned supreme as events unfolded around the world, and study of the progression from isolationism to intervention will be a major theme in this unit.

**Unit 4: Allied Power**

The Battle of the Atlantic, which has been raging since the outbreak of war, starts turning in favor of the Allies. British forces make gains against the Axis in North Africa and will soon be joined by the Americans through Operation Torch, much to the displeasure of Stalin, whose Red Army has been suffering huge losses through fighting in Russia. Students will discuss the decision to postpone the Allied invasion of France in favor of action North Africa and Italy. Students will examine the early Pacific battles of the war, and analyze the strategies employed by General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz, particularly the concept of “island-hopping”.

**Unit 5: Axis on the Run**

The year 1944 was a turning point in the war. The Allies finally march into Rome in June, at the same time thousands of Allied troops were preparing to cross the English Channel and invade Fortress Europe on the beaches of Normandy. The planning, use of deception, challenges, and success of this mission will be discussed. As the Allies in Europe march eastward, the Soviets continue to make gains westward, and are the first to encounter the horrific Nazi death camps. Operation Market Garden and the last German offensive, the Battle of the Bulge, will be examined. Over in the Pacific, the island-hopping strategy provides American victories, but also huge losses of life. These battles in the Gilbert, Marshall, Mariana and Palau Islands will be analyzed. The Americans return to the Philippines and nearly decimate the Japanese fleet in the Battle of Leyte Gulf.
Unit 6: Victory

In Europe, Allied victory is close at hand in 1945. The plans for post-war Europe are determined at a meeting between FDR, Churchill, and Stalin at Yalta will be examined. Students will trace the movements of Allied troops – the British and Americans in the west, and the Soviets in the east – as the Germans are pushed back into Berlin, and the decision by General Eisenhower to allow the Soviets to take the city will be discussed. Meanwhile, in the Pacific, the Battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa would prove to be two of the most important and catastrophic victories for the Americans. With the invasion of the home islands of Japan as the next step, another meeting of the Allied leaders would take place in Potsdam, where an ultimatum was issued to Japan to surrender without condition. The Japanese are ultimately forced to surrender, after experiencing the incredible destruction of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs.

Unit 7: Ethical Issues of WWII (Final Project)

The course of the Second World War was fought unlike any war in history, both sides made committed atrocities and made strategic decisions that have raised ethical questions that may deserve thoughtful discussion.

Topics will include:
- Holocaust
- Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Japanese Internment
- Bombing Civilian Targets
- Torture
- Kamikaze Pilots

Unit 8: Innovations of WWII (Final Project)

While the inventions and technological improvements of this war can never be justified against the appalling loss of life, World War II completely shaped the technological world that we live in now. Without this conflict, we simply would not have access to the wide range of technology that we use on a daily basis. With the war encompassing vast chunks of the globe, the stakes were incredibly high. It’s against this backdrop that governments put vast sums of money into the research and development of technology to help them win the war. World War II saw projects being green lit that in peacetime wouldn’t have gotten off the ground. It also made people think in a completely different way, coming up with inventions that simply wouldn’t have happened at the same pace in peace time.

Topics for discussion and lecture will include:
- Atomic Weapons
- Radar
· Jet Airplanes
· V-2 Rocket
· Encryption
· Radio Navigation and landing
· Pressurized Cabins
· Programmable Computer
· Penicillin
· Synthetic Rubber and Oil