

Department of History
University of Wisconsin-Madison
College of Letters and Science

Japan and World War Two in Asia History 456

Spring 2010
MW 9:55-10:45, F 9:55-11:50
1651 Humanities

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Course description

World War Two was many wars. Fought on multiple fronts, the war involved a complex tangle of war aims and competing ideologies. The advent of “total war” blurred the line between the home front and the battlefield and necessitated the mobilization of domestic societies in unprecedented ways. The war introduced new weapons of mass destruction that targeted both civilians and soldiers. This course looks at these issues from the vantage point of Japanese history, focusing on what Japanese call the “Asia-Pacific War.” Beginning with the post World War One settlement, we track the gathering crisis of the twenties and thirties through the outbreak of a multi-front war against China, against the USSR, against the US, and against the European empires in Southeast Asia. We also examine end of “hot” war and the beginnings of “cold” war in Asia. The course is divided into three sections, tracing the history of the conflict in turn through international, political-economic, and socio-cultural narratives.

Mondays and Wednesdays will be devoted to class lectures; the longer time slot on Friday is designated for film screenings. We will watch a combination of documentaries, animation, and feature films. Students are expected to approach the movies and documentaries with a critical eye. These films tell a specific story; they present a particular point of view. One of the goals of the course is to develop critical skills in evaluating visual representations of the war.

Readings

Reading assignments are drawn from a combination of primary and secondary sources. We read monographic studies of the war by John Dower (racial ideologies in the conflict between America and Japan), Ben Ami Shillony (politics of the wartime regime and mobilization policies), and Chalmers Johnson (an intellectual and social history of one of Japan’s foremost “China hands”) as well as an excellent compilation of oral interviews by Haruko and

Theodore Cook, supplemented with several shorter readings. Together, these should provide students with a window on the war from a variety of perspectives. The readings, like the course itself, are meant to convey the multidimensional nature of the war.

The following required readings have been ordered for purchase at the University Book Store:

John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War (Pantheon, 1986)

Chalmers Johnson, An Instance of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy Ring (Stanford University Press, 1992)

Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook, Japan at War: An Oral History (New Press, 1992)

All other readings are available on the class website at Learn@ UW.

Ben Ami Shillony, Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan (Oxford University Press, 1981), all.

William Tsutsui, Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of the Monsters (Palgrave, 2004), pp 13-42.

Louise Young, Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism (UC Press, 1998), pp 115-182.

Alan Tansman, ed., The Culture of Japanese Fascism (Duke 2009), pp. 138-184.

Requirements

- Discussion section (15%) Come to class regularly and participate actively in class activities.
- In-class midterm examination (20%) Scheduled for March 5, the exam will cover material through the first section of the course. The format of the exam will be a combination of short answer/identification questions and a choice of longer essay questions.
- Final examination (30%) The final is comprehensive and covers all material covered in class lectures, readings, and films. Like the midterm, the format of the exam will be a combination of short answer/identifications and essay questions.
- Final paper (35%) This assignment has three parts.
 - (1) Possible paper topics. Pick five possible paper topics to bring to a library workshop scheduled for **March 19**. The workshop will help with strategies for narrowing down topics and figuring out their feasibility in terms of available source material. Topics should be drawn from class material and can be anything that sparked your interest in a

particular reading, lecture, discussion, or film. Pick things you want to learn more about--wartime film, the Comintern and Japan, peace negotiations, forced labor... the possibilities are limitless.

- (2) Paper proposal and bibliography. Due in class on **March 26**. Provide a one-paragraph description of your topic and the historical question you will be asking. For example, if “wartime film” is your topic an historical question might be: How were Japan’s enemies represented in film? You should include a bibliography of 4-8 sources. These can be all secondary sources or a combination of primary and secondary sources, depending on what is available on your topic.
- (3) Final paper. Due in class **May 3**, papers should be 10-12 pages in length, excluding title page and bibliography.

Class schedule

Week 1

January 20 introduction
January 22 film screening. *Pacific Century: “Meiji”- Asia’s Response to the West*

I. The International Arena: World War Two in Asia and the Pacific

Readings: John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, all; William Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind*, 13-42; Haruko Cook and Theodore Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*, pp 3-168, 259-336.

Midterm examination **March 5** on material from section I.

Week 2

Reading: *Japan at War*, pp. 3-120.
January 25 World War One
January 27 Japan’s “China problem”
January 29 film screening. *Why We Fight: Battle for China*

Week 3

Reading: *Japan at War*, pp. 121-168, 259-336.
February 1 new colonialism: Manchukuo
February 3 China Incident
February 5 film screening. *Nanjing: Memory and Oblivion*

Week 4

Read: *War Without Mercy*, pp. 3-117.
February 8 New Imperialisms: America and Japan in the Pacific
February 10 the road to Pearl Harbor
February 12 film screening. *Know Your Enemy: Japan*

Week 5

- Read: *War Without Mercy*, pp. 118-233.
February 15 strike north versus strike south
February 17 air power and the atom bomb
February 19 film screening. *Wings of Defeat*

Week 6

- Read: *War Without Mercy*, pp. 234-318; *Godzilla on My Mind*, pp. 13-42.
February 22 defeat and surrender
February 24 occupation and the origins of the Cold War in Asia
February 26 film screening. *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*

II. Politics and Economy in Wartime Japan

Read: Ben Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, all;
Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, pp. 115-180; Haruko Cook and Theodore Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*, pp. 337-400.

Bring 5 possible paper topics for library workshop **March 19**.

Paper proposal with bibliography of 4-8 sources due **March 26**.

Week 7

- No reading; study for midterm.
March 1 empire, war, and the Japanese economy
March 3 the “economic muddle” of the 1920s
March 5 Midterm Examination

Week 8

- Read: *Japan's Total Empire*, pp. 115-180.
March 8 the constitution and the “emperor system”
March 10 “Taisho demokurashii”
March 12 film screening. *Pacific Century: Kita Ikki and Lu Hsun*

Week 9

- Read: *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, pp. 1-90.
March 15 militarism and the rise of the right
March 17 the controlled economy
March 19 library workshop. bring 5 possible paper topics

Week 10

- Read: *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, pp. 91-178.
March 22 politics under fascism

March 24 total war and the national defense state
March 26 film screening. *Twenty-four Eyes*

Week 11

Read: *Japan at War*, pp. 337-400.
April 5 defeat on the home front
April 7 occupation and reform
April 9 film screening. *Grave of the Fireflies*

III. The War at Home: Culture and Everyday Life

Read: Chalmers Johnson, *An Instance of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy Ring*, pp. 1-216; Alan Tansman, ed., *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, pp. 138-184; Haruko Cook and Theodore Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*, pp. 169-258, 401-479.

Final Paper due May 3

Final examination scheduled:

Week 12

Read: *Japan at War*, pp. 169-258, *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, pp. 138-184.
April 12 leftism and liberalism in the 1920s
April 14 war fever!
April 16 film screening. *The Roots of Anime*

Week 13

Read: *An Instance of Treason*, pp. 1-113.
April 19 women and war
April 21 erotic grotesque nonsense
April 23 film screening. *Osaka Elegy*

Week 14

Read: *An Instance of Treason*, pp. 114-216.
April 26 agrarianism and rural revival
April 28 Intellectuals and fascism
April 30 film screening. *No Regrets for Our Youth*

Week 15

Read: *Japan at War*, pp. 401-479.
Final Paper due May 3
May 3 Tokyo Trials/ war responsibility
May 5 A-bomb literature
May 7 film screening. *Hellfire*