

**HISTORY 192C:  
SEMINAR IN RECENT INTERPRETATIONS  
OF ASIAN HISTORY**

**HIROSHIMA AS HISTORY**

Spring 2008  
Location: ARC 1008  
MW: 3:00-4:15

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Prof. Jeffrey Dym

Office: Tahoe 3088

Office Hours: MW: 1:30-2:30; T 9:00-10:00

And by appointment!

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**CSUS CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

Reading seminar in recent scholarship and current trends in the interpretation of Asian history. Designed especially for History majors and present and prospective history teachers. Note: not open to lower division students. Prerequisite: Passing score on WPE. 3 units.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

To some people, history is nothing more than an unending series of names, places, events, and dates—what some might call “facts.” The serious student of history knows, however, that a deep understanding of a historical “fact” only comes from placing that fact within the context of other facts and applying cogent analysis. It is through interpretation that meaningful understanding arises. Some insist that history is objective and complain that historians are constantly rewriting history—a complaint based on the supposition that historical understanding never changes. In reality, there is a never ending sublime reinterpretation of facts based on an ever evolving understanding of the world. Moreover, each historian’s unique understanding of the world, affects his or her understanding and interpretation of history.

This course will primarily focus two historical facts: at 8:15 on August 6, 1945 an atomic bomb exploded above Hiroshima, Japan, and at 11:02 on August 9, 1945 another atomic bomb exploded over the city of Nagasaki. Few events in world history have so clearly demarcated a drastic change in human civilization as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Over the next 15 weeks we will examine how various people over the last 62 years have interpreted these events and how their understanding of these events have been influenced by the world in which they wrote. Gender, race, nationality, education, and political views are just a few of the factors that weave their way into one’s analysis of history. We will try and uncover these elements in the writings about the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that we will be reading and in your analytical writings on these readings. In addition, we

will view a number of movies, video clips, photographs, and other audio-visual material to give us a visual history of what transpired. These audio-visual depictions will also reveal an evolution in how people have interpreted the bombings. We will also look at how the bombings have shaped the national identities of Japan and America.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To gain a deeper understanding of the nature of historical scholarship.
- To delve into the interpretation of history
- To gain a sense of how to read, think, and write critically about history.
- To understand how one's world view affects one's understanding of history as well as one's writing about history.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

#### Everyone will read

Gar Alperovitz. *The Decision to Use the Bomb* (1995).

Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (1999).

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman and the Surrender of Japan* (2005).

John Hersey. *Hiroshima* (1946; 1985).

Robert J. Maddox, ed. *Hiroshima in History* (2007).

James J. Orr. *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (2001).

Ienaga Saburo, *Pacific War, 1931-1945* (1979).

Kyoko & Mark Selden, eds. *The Atomic Bomb: Voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1989).

George Weller, *First into Nagasaki* (2006).

#### Only some of the class will read

Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (1997).

Gavin Daws, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific* (1994).

George L. Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (1994).

## REQUIREMENTS & GRADING CRITERIA

Class participation & attendance	20%
Class presentation and discussion leader	5%
Position papers	45%
Term Paper	30%

**ATTENDANCE** is expected at all class meetings. (How else can you learn?) Students should notify the instructor in the event of extended absence. Withdrawals will be permitted only up to the scheduled deadline.

No students may leave the classroom before the class hour ends unless I am informed before class of an unavoidable appointment.

All cellular telephones must be turned off or set on Silent Mode (what they call “Manner Mode” in Japanese). A disruption of class caused by your phone ringing will be held against you.

## READINGS

Since everyone is required to participate in the class discussion, it is imperative that you do the reading.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class participation forms a major portion of your grade. Everyone is expected to be prepared and to participate in class discussion.

## DISCUSSION LEADER

Every week one or two students will lead the class discussion on the reading.

## POSITION PAPERS

Position papers should be double spaced and at least 600 words, but no more than 1000 words in length. Roughly two to three pages. These papers should contain a succinct summary of the thesis of the work and your critical reaction to it. Through the position paper you must show me that you have thought critically about the reading. Do not summarize the reading! Focus on the thesis of the reading and write a cogent and analytical paper that takes a position for or against the thesis and is supported with evidence. These papers should be clearly organized and well written.

You must write a position paper for every reading. For certain weeks I will guide you in terms of a focus for your paper. **I will not accept any late position papers.**

## TERM PAPER

A term paper, at least 2500 words in length, is due on the last day of class. For this term paper, you need to take a position on an issue surrounding the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and make a cogent argument about it. Possible questions to answer are listed below. Pick only one. You may also write on your own topic, with my approval. The term paper must incorporate evidence from at least **FIVE** of

the readings that we will be discussing in class. Remember, an assertion without evidence is simply an opinion. Argument = assertion + evidence (example). I expect your papers to be worked around a clear and coherent argument, to be well written, and clearly articulated.

Term papers, as well as position papers, will be evaluated using the University's Writing Across the Curriculum's writing rubric. This rubric can be found at:

<http://www.csus.edu/wac/rubric.htm>

Possible questions to focus your term paper around:

1. How have the bombings affected Japan's sense of national identity.
2. Discuss Japan's decision to surrender.
3. What effect, if any, have the bombings had on historical interpretation and understanding of World War II in Japan.
4. Discuss how the historical memory of the bombings differ in the United States and Japan.
5. Discuss how the atomic bombings physically affected the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in both the short and long term.
6. What can one learn from the Japanese literary and artistic (films, paintings, etc) depictions of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?
7. Discuss how the bomb both negatively AND positively affected Japan.
8. Was the bomb critical to ending the Pacific War? Was it critical to saving American and Japanese lives? Discuss the issue in the context of the positions of Japan, the USSR, and the USA.
9. Why did the Truman administration use the atomic bomb at Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and then again three days later at Nagasaki? How did the administration subsequently justify its decision to drop these two atomic bombs on Japan?
10. What role did the bombs play in ending the Pacific War?
11. Assess the dominant positions within the scholarly and political debate over the decision to drop the atomic bombs.
12. Why is the debate surrounding the dropping of the atomic bombs still so heated over 60 years after they were detonated?

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

This course follows the CSUS Academic Honesty policy. If you are not familiar with California State University, Sacramento's Policies and Procedures Regarding Academic Honesty, please read them. They can be found at:

<http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umannual/UMA00150.htm>

In short, **CHEATING OR PLAGIARISM** will not be tolerated and may result in failure of the course and possible referral for academic discipline. I expect your position papers and your term paper to be your own work. If they are not, beware!

**“THE B- AGREEMENT”**: I imagine that this will be one of the most demanding courses you will take while an undergraduate at Sacramento State. Thus, I would like to acknowledge the effort you put into the course. If you attend every class (you may miss one class with an excused absence), hand in every paper on time, hand in “acceptable papers” (papers that address the assignment criteria (C or better)), and **actively** participate in every class discussion (you can not remain silent), then you will earn at least a “B-” for the course, even if the grades you receive on the assignments are lower than a B-. Of course, if you earn high marks on your work your grade will be much higher. If, however, you miss more than one class, hand in even one paper late, or remain silent during discussions, then you will earn the grade that your work is marked. In short, do all of the work on time and participate in class and you will earn at least a B-.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE

### Week 1 Introduction to Course

Mon., Jan. 28 Introduction to Course

#### Hiroshima as an Affair to Remember

Wed., Jan. 30 Video: *Hiroshima Mon Amour*

### Week 2 Hiroshima as an Affair to Remember

Mon., Feb. 4 Video: *Hiroshima Mon Amour*

#### Background: The Pacific War

Wed., Feb. 6 Book discussion of, and position paper due for: Ienaga Saburo, *Pacific War, 1931-1945*.

### Week 3 Background: The Pacific War

Mon., Feb. 11 Video: *Victory in the Pacific*

Wed., Feb. 13          Video: *Victory in the Pacific*

Week 4    Political History: The Decision to Drop the Bomb

Mon., Feb. 18          Book discussion of, and position paper due for: Gar Alperovitz. *The Decision to Use the Bomb*. Book One: The Decision, pp. 15-420.

Wed., Feb. 20          Video: *Trinity and Beyond: The Atomic Bomb Movie*.

Week 5    Political History: Japan's Decision to Surrender

Mon., Feb. 25          Book discussion of, and position paper due for: Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*.

Wed., Feb. 27          Video: *Lifting the Fog: The Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*.

Week 6    Military History: The Decision to Drop the Bomb Reconsidered

Mon., March 3          Book discussion of, and position paper due for: Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman and the Surrender of Japan*.

Wed., March 5          Video: *The Day After Trinity: J. Robert Oppenheimer & The Atomic Bomb*

Week 7    Images of Destruction

Mon., March 10          Book discussion of, and position paper due for: John Hersey. *Hiroshima*.

Wed., March 12          Slides and pictures of the aftermath  
Video: *A Mother's Prayer*.  
*Hiroshima* (BBC History of World War II series)

Week 8    First Impressions of Destruction

Mon., March 17          Book discussion of, and position paper due for: George Weller, *First into Nagasaki*.

Wed., March 19          Video: *Barefoot Gen*

Week 9    Victim's Voices: Victims of the Bomb

Mon., March 24      Video: *Barefoot Gen*

Wed., March 26      Book discussion of, and position paper due for Kyoko & Mark Selden, eds. *The Atomic Bomb: Voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki*

**SPRING BREAK: MARCH 29-APRIL 6**

Week 10 Victim's Voices: Victims of the Japanese

Mon., April 7      Book Discussion: We will discuss all three books, though you will each only read one of them. Position paper for your selection due. We will decide the order in class a week or two before.

Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II.*

Video: *Rape of Nanking*

Wed., April 9      Gavin Daws, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific.*

Video: *Japanese War Crimes: Murder Under the Sun*

Week 11 Victim's Voices: Victims of the Japanese

Mon., April 14      George L. Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*

Video: *Japanese Devils*

Wed., April 16      Video: *The Atom Strikes!* (U.S. Army Signal Corps, 1945)

Week 12 History as Fact or Fiction: Creating a Myth

Mon., April 21      Book discussion of, and position paper due for: Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Bomb*, Book Two: The Myth, pp. 420-668.

Wed., April 23      Video: *White Light, Black Rain*

Week 13 History as Revisionism: Fact or Fiction

Mon., April 28      Article discussion of, and position papers due for:  
*Hiroshima in History: The Myths of Revisionism.*

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