

565: 315 “Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb”
Rutgers University
Spring 2006

Syllabus

Instructor

Professor Paul Schalow
Scott Hall Rm. 325
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 2:30-3:00, or by app’t
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Course Description

The atomic bomb reverberates to this day in the literature of Japan. How do Japanese survivors remember and represent a pivotal event in their personal and national history? What does it mean for us today to confront these literary representations of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? This course explores these questions—and more—through analysis and discussion of Japanese prose, poetry, and film. All readings are in English translation.

Requirements

A one-page response sheet is due for each reading. Response sheets turned in on the day of the assigned reading earn 1 or 2 points, depending on my assessment of how well you have grasped the main points in the reading; late submissions are not accepted except in the case of an excused absence (illness, jury duty, and other legitimate reasons will be accepted with back-up documentation). You are required to submit two short 5-page papers on assigned topics during the semester, each worth 20%, and an 8-10 page final paper on an assigned topic, worth 30%. Final grades are based on the fifteen response sheets (30%), two 4-page papers (20% each), and the final paper (30%).

Required Texts (for purchase at Rutgers Bookstore, Ferren Mall; also usually at Jersey Books, Somerset Street)

1. ŌE Kenzaburō, *The Crazy Iris*
2. Richard MINEAR, *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*
3. IBUSE Masuji, *Black Rain*
4. KURIHARA Sadako, *When We Say Hiroshima: Selected Poems*
5. John TREAT, *Writing Ground Zero*

Class Schedule

- 17 Jan. Introduction: Positions, representations, and contexts.
- 19 Reading: *The Crazy Iris*, ODA Katsuzō “Human Ashes” 63-84. **Response Sheet (RS) #1**
- 24 Reading: *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, HARA Tamiki “Translator’s Introduction” 21-40.
Documentary film: “Hiroshima: City of Peace” (30 mins.)
- 26 Reading: *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, HARA Tamiki *Summer Flowers* parts 1 & 2 (“Summer Flowers” & “From the Ruins”) 41-78. **RS #2**
- 31 Reading: *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, HARA Tamiki *Summer Flowers* part 3 (“Prelude to Annihilation”) 79-113. **RS #3**
- 2 Feb. Reading: *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, ŌTA Yōko “Translator’s Introduction” 147-224.
Documentary film: “Hiroshima: the Legacy” (30 mins.)
- 7 Reading: *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, ŌTA Yōko *City of Corpses* (An Autumn So Horrible Even the Stones Cry Out” to “The City: A Tangle of Corpses”) 147-224. **RS #4**
- 9 Reading: *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, ŌTA Yōko *City of Corpses* (“Relief” to “Late Autumn Koto Music”) 225-273. **RS #5**
- 14 **First 5-page paper due.** Topic: Based on your reading of ODA Katsuzō’s “Human Ashes,” HARA Tamiki’s *Summer Flowers*, and ŌTA Yōko’s *City of Corpses*, describe the various ways people die in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Be sure to give specific examples from each story. What types of deaths are emphasized differently in each text? Which text gave you the most vivid sense of what it was like to be in Hiroshima in the minutes, hours, days, and months after it was bombed?
Documentary film: “Rain of Ruin: The Atomic Bombing of Japan” (70 mins.)
- 16 Reading: *The Crazy Iris*, ŌTA Yōko “Fireflies” 85-111. **RS #6**
- 21 Reading: *The Crazy Iris*, TAKENISHI Hiroko “The Rite” 169-200. **RS #7**
- 23 *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, TŌGE Sankichi “Translator’s Introduction” 277-300.
Documentary film: “The Race for the Bomb” (45 mins.)
- 28 *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, TŌGE Sankichi *Poems of the Atomic Bomb* 305-369. **RS #8**

- 2 Mar. KURIHARA Sadako, *When We Say Hiroshima: Selected Poems*. **RS #9**
- 7 NAGAI Takashi, *The Bells of Nagasaki* (xerox). **RS #10**
- 9 Documentary film: “Rain of Ruin: the Bombing of Nagasaki” (60 mins.)
- 21 **Second 5-page paper due.** Topic: Based on your viewing of five documentary films in class, give an account of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Explain the technology of two bombs and how they were developed. Describe the predominant perspective on the bombings that is presented in each documentary, and explain how that perspective impacts the film’s interpretation of the military and humanitarian dimensions of the events. You must address at least **three** of the five documentaries in your paper.
 Documentary film: “Children of Nagasaki” (45 mins.)
- 23 Reading: *The Crazy Iris*, HAYASHI Kyōko “The Empty Can” 127-143. **RS #11**
- 28 Reading: *The Crazy Iris*, INOUE Mitsuharu “The House of Hands” 145-168. **RS #12**
- 30 Reading: *The Crazy Iris*, SATA Ineko “The Colorless Paintings” 113-125. **RS #13**
- 4 Apr. Reading: *The Crazy Iris*, IBUSE Masuji “The Crazy Iris” 17-35. **RS #14**
- 6 Reading: IBUSE Masuji, *Black Rain*. **RS #15**
- 11 Film: IMAMURA Shōhei “Black Rain” (120 mins.)
- 13 Film: IMAMURA Shōhei “Black Rain” (cont.).
- 18 Film: NAKAZAWA Keiji “Barefoot Gen” (100 mins.)
- 20 Film: NAKAZAWA Keiji “Barefoot Gen” (cont.)
- 25 Film: KUROSAWA Akira “Rhapsody in August” (98 mins.)
- 27 Film: KUROSAWA Akira “Rhapsody in August” (cont.)
- 8 May (Mon). **Final paper** (8-10 pages) **due** in Scott Hall Rm. 330 by 4pm. Topic: Briefly explain your preconceptions about the atomic bombings before you took this course, and then describe in detail your current thinking. Which genre or genres (fiction, poetry, documentary, feature-length film) did you appreciate the most, and why? Be sure to discuss at least one work from each genre that had the biggest impact in developing your new perspective.