Hiroshima: Continuous Challenge with New Meanings

Course Description:

The course will explore the atomic bomb experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and its significance, which is nothing short of an unprecedented change in human history. We will begin by examining a road to the Asian Pacific War with a focus on the racial aspect of the war. We will not neglect to study Japan’s brutality on the Asian continents. We will analyze the forces which culminated in the atomic bombings and discuss why America dropped them. Then, we will explore the power of the atomic bombs by evaluating their physical, medical, and social effects on these two cities and their residents. Our investigations of these issues will include reading survivors’ accounts of the agony and destruction of the atomic bombings. This course also discusses the situation of Korean atomic bomb victims, whose voices have long been suppressed. By absorbing historical studies, eyewitness accounts, documentary films, photographs, poems and animation, we will attempt to comprehend the realities of what happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Through this course, by recognizing the long-lasting impacts of the atomic bombs on human beings and society, we hope to understand anew their implications for the whole world at present; furthermore, by addressing the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster, we will examine the impact of environmental degradation and the crisis of human existence.

Course Objective

The primary objectives of this course are to strengthen students’ knowledge of the atomic bombings and to gain a greater understanding of them by critically examining diverse narratives. This class will provide students with an opportunity to consider not only how Hiroshima’s message can speak to the people who suffered under the brutal Japanese occupation in Asia, but also to contemplate the meaning and impact of the events in the contemporary world.

Course Materials

Required Text

Additional Texts


Expect for the main textbook, xeroxes of assigned reading will be distributed in class the week before they are due.

Films

ABC Special: *Hiroshima: Why the Bomb was Dropped*. Narr. Peter Jennings. 1996.


Course Requirements:

The format of the course will be short lectures followed by discussions and presentations. Students will be expected to read all the assigned articles and books thoroughly before class, and prepare questions for class discussions.
Final Paper and Oral Presentations

Students should write a 5-8 page paper based on themes relevant to this course. Before starting to write the paper, you must submit a brief synopsis. Each student is required to deliver a short presentation (10-15 minutes) based on her/his final paper. The final paper is due on July 19.

Discussion Questions

During class discussions, all students are required to ask one question about the assigned readings (articles, chapters).

Reflection Essay

Students should write a one-page reflection paper: How has your view of Hiroshima changed (or remained unchanged) after taking this course? The reflection essay is due on July 26.

Evaluation:

- Class participation: 20%
- Discussion questions: 10%
- Oral presentation: 20%
- Paper synopsis: 5%
- Final paper: 35%
- Reflection essay: 10%

The class participation grade will be based on students’ preparation for and contributions to class discussion.

- Since this syllabus is worked out in advance as a guide to the course, I reserve the right to modify it if it is necessary. Should a change be made, an announcement will be given in advance.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (4/12): Introduction

Week 2 (4/19): The Origins of the Asian Pacific War I

We examine the origins of the Japan-U.S. conflict while paying attention to the racial aspect of this war.
Readings: Smethurst Richard J. “Japan, the United States, and the Road to World War II in the Pacific.”

http://japanfocus.org/-richard_j_-smethurst/3825/article.html


Handout: A list of pivotal events since the bakumatsu period and a brief explanation of their significance.

**Week 3 (4/26): The Origins of the Asian Pacific War II**

This week we focus on Japan’s imperialistic aspirations and brutal occupation of the Asian continent.


**Week 4 (5/10): Documentary Film: “Hiroshima: Why the Bomb was Dropped”**

While watching the documentary, which was made by ABC, a major American T.V. network, we will carefully evaluate this document.

**Week 5 (5/17): The Decision to Use the Bomb I**

We will examine both narratives over the use of atomic bomb and evaluate them critically.

**Week 6 (5/24): The Decision to Use the Bomb II**


**Week 7 (5/31): The Power of the Atomic Bombs: The Physical, Medical and Social Effects of Atomic Bombings**

We will examine the physical, medical, and social impact of the A-bombs; moreover, we will explore the Lucky Dragon No. 5 incident of 1945, where a group of tuna fishermen were exposed to fallout from a U.S. hydrogen bomb experiment.


**Week 8 (6/7): Who are the Victims?: The Diversity of the Target**

We will first discuss the origins of the Korean community in Hiroshima and the tragedy of Korean atomic bomb victims.

Readings: Hotta Chisato, “Who are the Victims?”


Week 9 (6/14): Witnesses to Atomic Bombings I: White Light Black Rain

Week 10 (6/21): Witnesses to Atomic Bombings II: Barefoot Gen


We will first discuss White Light Black Rain and Barefoot Gen. Then, in the second half of this class; we will investigate the “The Smithsonian Controversy” and its meanings.


Week 12 (7/5): The Legacy of Hiroshima and The Fukushima Daiiichi Nuclear Incident
We will discuss the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Incident and how the experience of Hiroshima can be utilized.

**Week 13 (7/12): Student Presentation**

**Week 14 (7/19): Student Presentation**

**Week 15 (7/26): Student Presentation & Wrap-Up**