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 battlefront 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.

Readings

Reading assignments are drawn from a combination of primary and secondary sources. I have assigned a textbook by Andrew Gordon that gives an overview of modern Japanese history and should serve as a reference, particularly for those of you without previous exposure to Japanese history. We read monographic studies of the war by John Dower (racial ideologies in the conflict between America and Japan) 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:
Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook, Japan at War: An Oral History (New
Press, 1992)
John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War
(Pantheon, 1986)
Andrew Gordon, A Modern History of Japan from Tokugawa Times to the
Chalmers Johnson, An Instance of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy
Ring (Stanford University Press, 1992)

All other readings are available on the class website at Learn@ UW.
Norma Field, In the Realm of a Dying Emperor: Japan at Century's End (Vintage,
1993), pp 4-104.
“Hiroshima in History and Memory: A Symposium,” essays by Bix, Bernstein,
and Dower, Diplomatic History 19, 2 (Spring 1995), pp 197-295.
Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie, The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945
James J. Orr, The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in
Postwar Japan (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), pp 1-70.
William Tsutsui, Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of the Monsters
(Palgrave, 2004), pp 13-42.
Daqing Yang, “The Malleable and the Contested: The Nanjing Massacre in
Postwar China and Japan,” in Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s),
50-86.

Requirements

- **Short essay #1 (25%)** Five page essay due in class October 10. Pick three
  interviews from Japan at War and compare the experience of the war
  from these different perspectives. What do the accounts focus on? Why?
  How do these accounts highlight values and shortcomings of oral history?
- **Short essay #2 (25%)** Five page essay due in class December 12. Compare
  the three films: Godzilla, Grave of the Fireflies, and Hellfire: A Journey from
  Hiroshima to explore the issue of war memory in Japan. What do the films
  tell you about war memory? How have memories changed over time?
- **In-class midterm examination (20%)** Scheduled for October 28, the exam
  will cover material through the first seven weeks 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.
**Essay Instructions**

- Five pages of double-spaced text in 12-point font.
- Hard copies must be handed to instructor in person. Late papers will not be accepted except in case of a documented emergency.
- Good writing takes effort. Take care to craft an essay that is well reasoned and builds effectively from opening to close. Make an outline, write a first draft, and then revise it. Edit the paper for word choice, grammar, and spelling.
- Avail yourself of Writing Center assistance. The Writing Center offers various forms of help including one-on-one tutoring, on line handouts, and workshops.
- Make use of the talent in the classroom. Find a partner or partners to exchange drafts for peer review.

**Class schedule**

**September 2** introduction

**Week 1**


- September 5 Labor Day/ NO CLASS
- September 7 the Meiji state and the “emperor system”
- September 9 politics under the constitution

**Week 2**


- September 12 the emergence of imperial Japan
- September 14 empire, war, and the Japanese economy
- September 16 NO CLASS

**Week 3**


- September 19 World War One and the East Asian regional system
- September 21 the peace conference and its aftermath
- September 23 “Taishō demokurashii”

**Week 4**


- September 26 the economic muddle of the 1920s
- September 28 public memory and memory politics
- September 30 film screening: *Nanjing: Memory and Oblivion*
Week 5
Read: Haruko and Theodore Cook, *Japan at War*, 169-258
October 3  Manchurian Incident
October 5  war fever!
October 7  film screening: *The Roots of Anime*

Week 6
Read: Chalmers Johnson, *An Instance of Treason*, pp 1-59, 84-139.
October 10  militarism and the rise of the right
            Paper #1 due in class
October 12  intellectuals and fascism
October 14  the “woman question” and the war

Week 7
October 17  film screening: *Know Your Enemy: Japan*
October 19  “fascism from below”
October 21  the China Incident

Week 8
October 24  film screening: *Wings of Defeat*, start
October 26  film screening: *Wings of Defeat*, end
October 28  Midterm examination

Week 9
Read: Andrew Gordon, *A History of Modern Japan*
October 31  total war in China
November 2  fascism from above and the national defense state
November 4  the road to Pearl Harbor

Week 10
November 7  the Greater East Asian War
November 9  the “great zoo massacre”
November 11  NO CLASS

Week 11
Read: “Hiroshima in History and Memory,” *Diplomatic History* 19.2, pp 197-295
November 14  film screening: *Grave of the Fireflies*, start
November 16  film screening: *Grave of the Fireflies*, finish
November 18  air power and the atomic bomb

Week 12
Read: Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*, pp 5-104.
November 21  defeat and delayed surrender
November 23  the Tokyo Trials: war crimes/ war responsibility
November 25  Thanksgiving Break/ NO CLASS

Week 13
November 28  film screening: *Godzilla* (Japanese version, 1954), start
November 30  film screening: *Godzilla*, finish
December 2  A-bomb literature

Week 14
December 5  film screening: *Hellfire: A Journey from Hiroshima*
December 7  occupation and reform
December 9  Japan in the cold war order

Week 15
December 12  Americanization/ embracing defeat
   Essay #2 due in class
December 14  the Asia-Pacific War in retrospect/ Examination review

FINAL EXAM
December 21  2:45 pm