

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

**History 200**  
**The Atomic Bomb in American and Japanese History**

Fall 2021 Tuesday 1:20-3:15  
In Person: Education L173

Professor Louise Young  
OH Mondays 1:30-3:30 and by appointment  
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**Course description**

When the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, the world entered the nuclear age. This affected every country on the planet, but the atom bomb holds special meaning for Japan and the United States. This course will explore the history of this special relationship with the bomb, and through the bomb with each other.

I have divided the course into three parts, each dealing with a separate dimension of the atomic bomb. Part One examines the decision to drop the bomb, both the real time context that led up to August 6 and 9, 1945; and the debate over the ethics and necessity of this decision that broke out in the immediate aftermath and continues to the present day. Part Two looks at the atomic bomb in culture and memory, comparing the construction of meaning around the bomb in the United States and Japan. Part Three focuses on the larger legacies of the bomb for international politics and security, touching on issues such as nuclear proliferation, the peace movement, nuclear terror, nuclear diplomacy and other aspects of our “atomic age”.

This course is offered for 3 credits.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Develop empathy towards the experience of others by learning about and comparing American and Japanese views of the atom bomb
- Learn to see a policy issue such as the use of atomic weapons from multiple perspectives
- Become informed and engaged public citizens around an issue of historical and contemporary significance
- Make effective presentations
- Foster discussion and “think out loud”
- Peer review & constructive criticism—both giving and receiving
- Use primary materials to construct historical arguments
- Write compelling and coherent essays
- Develop effective reading strategies to synthesize complex historical materia

### **Disabilities**

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please let me know so that such accommodations may be arranged. For additional assistance, please contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center: [mcburney.wisc.edu](http://mcburney.wisc.edu), 608-263-2741 (phone), or 608-225-7956 (text).

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is taking credit for someone else's work whether deliberately or unintentionally. This includes but is not limited to turning in all or part of an essay written by someone other than yourself (a friend, an internet source, etc.) and claiming it as your own, and including information or ideas from research material without citing the source. Avoid plagiarism by carefully and correctly citing your sources whenever you use someone else's words, equations, graphics, or ideas. If you are unsure of something and are worried you may be plagiarizing, come see the instructor. Cite sources carefully, completely, and meticulously; when in doubt, cite. For additional help, see

<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/journalism/research-help/plagiarism-resources/>

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

- |                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| ● attendance and participation | 28 points/10% |
| ● discussion board             | 22 points/15% |
| ● lead class discussion        | 20 points/10% |
| ● high school collaboration    | 18 points/10% |
| ● presentations                | 20 points/10% |
| ● short essay #1               | 30 points/15% |
| ● short essay #2               | 30 points/15% |
| ● peer reviews                 | 10 points/5%  |
| ● revised essay                | 10 points/5%  |
| ● History Lab                  | 10 points/5%  |

### **Attendance and Participation**

Promptness and regular attendance is crucial for the success of this class—not just for your own success, but also for the success of your classmates and instructor. Please be respectful and responsible to all of us by arriving on time, and preparing for class.

### **Discussion board**

Our discussion board will be our forum for interacting asynchronously. Students will make weekly posts and responses in order to prepare for in person class meetings. Everyone should post a response to the weekly discussion questions (DQ) by Saturday evening at 11:59 pm. By Monday evening at 11:59 pm, please respond proactively to at least 2 of your classmates' posts.

Please refer to the [Discussion Weekly Rhythm](#) to help manage your time.

### **Lead class discussion**

Starting in week 5, students will lead class discussion in teams of 2-3. You will meet with me two weeks in advance (having read ahead) to come up with the discussion questions for that week, so I can post questions to the class website the Tuesday prior to your discussion session. Each team will lead class discussion once.

### **Presentations**

One of the learning outcomes of this class is to improve public speaking. Students will work in small groups to prepare presentations for class in weeks 6 and 12. Each student will prepare their own powerpoint slide(s) and make a 5-minute presentation, but groups should work together to ensure their presentations connect into a coherent and overarching narrative.

The presentation assignments are linked to the essay assignments (see below). Choose a theme that will serve for both, and use your presentation to outline and think through your essay.

Grading rubric: Your presentation will be graded on substance/content (3 possible points), organization/clarity (3 possible points), and performance (4 possible points).

### **Essay #1 & #2**

You have two required short essays for this class, 6-7 pp (1800-2000 words) each. Word count excludes footnotes and bibliography.

#1: Was the bomb justified? Using the assigned readings, make your case. Due October 29.

#2: analyze a [primary source in context](#). Pick a novel, film, memoir, testimonial, exhibition or other primary source and provide a historical interpretation of your source. Due December 10.

Grading rubric: 10 points for argument and organization; 10 points for evidence and substance; 10 points for style and documentation.

### **Peer review sessions**

One of the most challenging aspects of academic writing is learning how to give and receive constructive feedback. We will practice these skills by working in groups to discuss our essays.

### **Collaboration with the American School in Japan (ASIJ)**

We will be meeting synchronously three times over the semester with a Japanese history course taught at ASIJ, a private school in Tokyo for English speakers. You will be broken into small groups (3-4 UW students paired with 3 ASIJ students), and UW and ASIJ students will trade off leading discussion. Because of the time difference, the virtual meetings have been scheduled for September 30 at 6:15-7:15 pm, November 4 at 7:45-8:45 pm, and December 5 at 6:45-7:45 pm. Please let me know asap of any time conflicts.

Document your collaboration with a brief (1-2 paragraph) report, uploaded to canvas the Friday after your meeting.

### **Revised essay**

Revise either essay #1 or essay #2 based on peer review and the in-class workshop.

### **History Lab**

You are required to make at least two visits to the History Lab to help you with your essays. The History Lab is a fantastic resource for moving your writing skills to the next level. The Lab is a resource where expert history PhD students work with you and your history projects 1-on-1. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts—the History Lab staff will help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Visit the History Lab website <http://go.wisc.edu/HLAB> to schedule an appointment with a Lab TA or to find writing tips, guides, and resources.

Document your meeting by reporting the date and name of the TA you met with, as well as what you accomplished. Upload to canvas.

## **Class schedule**

Week 1

14 September *introduction and course orientation*

**Discussion board:** self-introductions; how did you learn about the bomb? Write a paragraph detailing your first memory of learning about the existence of atomic bombs or the use of atomic weapons against Japan. Was it through a movie or a book? Fiction/ non-fiction? School? Family? How did this shape your attitude toward the bomb?

Sign up for small group work

- **lead discussion:** look at topics, weeks 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 13, and pick one week to help lead discussion (2-3 people per topic).
- **group presentations:** sign up for a team (3-4 people per team).
- **ASIJ collaboration:** sign up for a group (3-4 people per group).

### PART 1: THE DECISION TO DROP THE BOMB

Week 2

21 September *the battlefield context*

**Watch:**

documentary film [\*Wings of Defeat\*](#) (90 minutes)

**Discussion board:** Write a one page post answering at least two of the discussion questions (DQ):

1. Why was the kamikaze program developed at the end of the war? What were its military objectives? What were the propaganda purposes? In what ways did it succeed? How did it fail?
2. What does the documentary tell us about the myths and the realities of the kamikaze pilots? How have the myths lived on into the present day? How do these stereotypes affect the ways Americans view Japan? The ways Japanese view the history of the Asia-Pacific War?
3. What were the motivations of individual pilots? Why did they follow orders?
4. Are the kamikaze unique to Japan?

Week 3

28 September *Why was the bomb used?*

**Read:**

The Choices Program, "Ending the War Against Japan: Science, Morality, and the Atomic Bomb" (2005), 1-34; Sean Malloy, "When You Have to Deal with a Beast"--Race, Ideology, and the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb", in [Age of Hiroshima](#), 56-70;

J Samuel Walker, "The Decision to Use the Bomb; a Historiographical Debate" in [Hiroshima in History and Memory](#), 11-37.

**Discussion board:** Post your DQ for ASIJ virtual meetings

**ASIJ virtual meeting on Thursday September 30 at 6:15-7:15 pm:** UW students lead discussion on the decision to drop the bomb. Send your questions to ASIJ students before your meeting. ASIJ students will send you a link for the meeting.

Week 4

5 October *air power and the a-bomb*  
ASIJ debrief

**Read:**

Ronald Schaffer [Wings of Judgment](#) 1-34, 107-176 (chapters 1-2, 6-8)

**Discussion board:** Write a one page post answering at least two of the discussion questions (DQ):

1. How did ideas of total war shape the development of aerial warfare doctrine? What kind of lines were drawn between military and civilian targets?

2. How did moral considerations come into the development of aerial warfare doctrine? Was there a difference between individualized moral judgments of men like Curtis LeMay, who orchestrated bombing campaigns, or moral considerations at a formalized policy level? Did the moral ground shift over the course of World War Two?
3. How did firebombing connect to atomic bombing?
4. Based on Schaffer's book, do you think there was a racial aspect to the decision to drop the bomb on Japan?

Week 5

12 October *Japan's struggle to surrender*  
 \*student-led discussion (1)  
 debrief ASIJ

**Read:**

T Hasegawa, Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan, read chapters 4-6 & conclusion (pp 130-251, 290-306) and skim for background intro and chapters 1-3 (pp 1-129). Access UW e-book from library

**Discussion board:** DQ to be posted.

Week 6

19 October *group presentations #1:*  
*Evaluating the use of the bomb*

**Read:** The Choices Program, "Ending the War Against Japan: Science, Morality, and the Atomic Bomb" (2005), 35-43.

**Presentation #1:**

1. Pick one of the 8 "issues raised by the atomic bomb" to focus on.
2. Prepare a group presentation where you (a) lay out the issue and its historical context and (b) your views of the ethical and interpretive questions this issue raises.

PART 2: ATOMIC BOMB CULTURES IN THE US AND JAPAN

Week 7

26 October *Commemorations & memory*  
 \*student-led discussion (2)

**Read:**

Hiroshima in History and Memory, 1-10, 116-142, 168-186, 200-232;  
Discordant Memories, chapter 2, 55-80;  
Living with the Bomb, 3-36.

**Discussion board:** DQ to be posted

**Essay #1 Due October 29**

Week 8

2 November *Arts of the bomb in Japan*  
\*student-led discussion (3)

**Look at:**

MIT [Visualizing Cultures](#)  
documentary [Hellfire](#) (58 minutes)  
Maruki Gallery [site](#)

**Discussion board:** DQ to be posted

**ASIJ virtual meeting #2 on Thursday November 4 from 7:45-8:45 pm:** ASIJ students lead discussion on a bomb narratives in Japan

Week 9

9 November *Peer review of essay #1*  
([see peer review #1](#)).  
ASIJ debrief

Week 10

16 November *Public culture of the bomb in the US*  
\*student-led discussion (4)

**Read:**

Paul Boyer, [By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age](#), 3-26, 179-288;  
Atomic Heritage Foundation, "Atomic Culture", 1-16.

**Discussion board:** DQ to be posted

Week 11

23 November *Ideology & nationalism*  
\*student-led discussion (5)

**Read:**

James Orr, [The Victim as Hero](#), 1-13, 36-70, 106-136;  
Lisa Yoneyama, [Hiroshima Traces](#), chapter 5.

**Discussion board:** DQ to be posted

Week 12

30 November *group presentations #2: Primary material in context*

**Presentation #2**

See instructions and list of sources to choose from: "[A bomb primary source list](#)"

## PART 3: LEGACIES FOR OUR WORLD

Week 13	7 December <i>Atomic age in global context</i> *student-led discussion (6)  <b>Read:</b> <u>The Age of Hiroshima</u> , 1-16 (Ch 1), 71-128 (ch 5-7), 144-163 (Ch 9), 201-220 (ch 12); “Resisting Nuclear Terror” in <u>War and State Terrorism</u> , 227-240; Access e-books from UW library  <b>Discussion board:</b> DQ to be posted; post your questions for ASIJ collaboration  <b>ASIJ virtual meeting #3 on Sunday December 5 at 6:45-7:45.</b> UW students lead discussion on legacies of the bomb.  <b>Essay #2 Due Dec 10</b>
Week 14	14 December <i>Peer Review</i> <a href="#">peer review #2</a>
Finals week	<b>submit revised essay #1 or #2 , Dec 21 at noon</b>