

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

Theory/History/Japan
History 855

Spring 2022
Wednesday 3:30-5:30
Education 151
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OH by appointment
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Description

The practice of history has been shaken up after several decades of theoretical provocations, set in motion by a series of turns: the cultural turn, the linguistic turn, the transnational turn. We must now navigate a thicket of “posts” (post structuralism, post colonialism, post humanism), “news” (the new imperial history, the new humanities, the new materialism) and “criticals” (critical regionalism, critical race studies, critical Asian studies) as we read, write, and teach history. This course will help you build an intellectual compass to guide you through this wealth of theory and find ways to bring it into your historical practice.

The syllabus is set up to match a theoretical/conceptual reading with a historical monograph on the same theme—e.g. Terry Eagleton, Ideology with Carol Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths; and William Sewell, Logics of History with John Dower, Embracing Defeat. Topics have been chosen to match the research interests of students planning on attending the seminar.

Requirements

1. **Attendance and participation.** (15%)
2. **Weekly web response.** (15%) Each week by 11:00 am the day our class meets, all students should post a short response to the readings on the [course website](#) at canvas.
 - a. For those weeks we are reading a historical monograph, please develop 2-3 discussion questions. Pose your question, but also explain what prompted you to ask it.
 - b. For those weeks we are reading a theoretical text, sketch out 2-3 concepts you find useful for your work or that have changed the way you think about history. One paragraph per concept.

3. **Presentation: theory in context.** (15%) Pick one topic from the syllabus and situate the featured work within the broader context of theory on this theme. For example, if you choose “new imperial histories”, help situate the assigned texts for the class. What is new about the new imperial history? How is it different from the old imperial history? What are the underlying theories of imperialism that the old and new histories build upon? Can you provide a thumbnail sketch of the chronological development of theories/histories of imperialism? What kinds of presentist concerns drive theoretical debate? Your presentation should take no more than 10 minutes (please practice to keep time). Bring a one-page outline of the presentation to distribute to the class. (See [prompts](#) for all theory/method sessions)
4. **Annotated bibliography.** (15%) Students will prepare a bibliography covering work on your master’s or dissertation topic, composed of theoretical and historical (or literary) works. The bibliography should include 8-10 books and articles and be organized thematically. Annotations may include brief descriptions of your thematic categories and/or brief descriptions of the titles included in the bibliography. Students will present their conclusions orally as brief in-class presentations (10 minutes) and in writing as annotated bibliographies. Due one week after your in-class presentation.
5. **Ten-page essay.** (40%) In the essay, lay out the theoretical influences on your own work. Alternatively, you can pick one of the monographs and discuss the use/misuse/lack of theory. Ideally, this assignment should build on (2) the presentation of theory in context and (3) the annotated bibliography. Due May 3.
6. For those of you in other disciplines or working on particular projects such as prelims, I am open to adapting these assignments to suit your academic programs.
7. [March 4 symposium](#) (1:00-5:00 pm) & graduate student workshop (10:00-11:30 am). I am co-organizing a workshop on Postwar Germany and Japan, with a group of leading scholars of the post 1945 period. You are invited to participate.

Class Schedule

I. *introduction*

26 Jan.

Overview of the syllabus, roundtable introductions. Prepare for class: 5-minute self-introduction to your research interests. Bring a one-paragraph description of your project (as it is currently formulated: we expect these to be diamonds in the rough!) to circulate (8 copies).

II. *the social*

2 February

William Sewell, Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformations (Online, madcat), 1-174, 318-373 (ch. 1-5, 10)

9 February

John Dower, Embracing Defeat ([course files](#)), 33-120, 168-202, 225-273 (ch. 1-3, 5, 7-8, 17, epilogue)

III. *law and history*

16 February

Dubber and Tomlins, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Legal History* (2018) (online madcat), read 3 essays from Part II: Approaches; explore Mitra Shirafi's [Legal History Blog](#) & read these two short pieces on Hurst and Hartog ([course files](#)). Here are Prof Shirafi's [instructions](#) for reading her blog.

guest: Mitra Shirafi on LHB as entry to new legal history

23 February

Pars Cassel, Grounds of Judgment (online madcat), all.

III. *ideology*

2 March

Terry Eagleton, Ideology, an Introduction (2007) (internet archive), 1-158.

9 March

Carol Gluck, Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period (internet archive), 1-72, 157-246

guest: Sarah Thal on methods in intellectual history

16 March

SPRING BREAK

V. *new imperial histories*

23 March

Andrew Thompson, Writing Imperial Histories (online madcat), 1-48, 74-99, 118-142, 168-187, 216-239 (intro & chs 1,3,5,7,9); Patrick Wolfe, "History and Imperialism" ([course files](#))

30 March Louise Young, Japan's Total Empire, TBA
(online madcat)

VI. *the new materialism*

6 April Nick Fox, Sociology and the New Materialism, 1-28
Cool & Frost, "Introducing the New Materialisms",
1-44
Tim Morton, "Hyperobjects", 1-24
Ian Bogost, "Alien Phenomenology, 1-34
Reflections on the Posthuman in International
Relations: The Anthropocene, Security and Ecology,
select one chapter to read.
(all available at [course files](#))
Recommended: [podcast on new materialisms](#)

13 April Mizuno et al, Engineering Asia: Technology, Colonial
Development, and the Cold War Order, TBA (online
madcat)

guest: Derek Kramer on STS & colonial/postcolonial
East Asia

VII. *nationalism*

20 April Umut Ozkirimli, Theories of Nationalism: A critical
introduction (2010), 49-219 (chs 3-7) ([course files](#))

27 April Oguma Eiji, A Genealogy of Japanese Self Images, all

VIII. *summary session*

4 May