

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

History 201—The Historian's Craft
Japan After 1945: Cold War Asia and the Atomic Age

Fall 2025 Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:45
In Person: B115 Van Vleck
[canvas website](#)

Professor Louise Young
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OH Mondays 1:30--3:20

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Course description

World War Two represents a transformational event for the twentieth century world. The dramatic stories of the war and its aftermath include the momentary triumph of fascism as a global movement and its military defeat; the redrawing of geopolitical maps as hot wars resolved themselves into cold wars; the rise and fall of empires; decolonization and the emergence of a “third world” of new nations. In what ways did World War Two and its aftermath reshape Asia? This course explores this question by looking at the case of Japan. How do the stories of Japan's defeat, the US occupation, and the creation of the regional cold war order complicate our understanding of the twentieth century world?

History 201 is a course in the “historian's craft,” which means we learn basic skills in the practice of history through our study of post-imperial Japan. After a short introductory section, I have divided the course into three thematic sections, each exploring one aspect of the World War Two transformation and its impact on postwar Japan. Part 2 focuses on the atomic bombing of Japan and its impact on “a-bomb cultures” in the US and Japan. Part 3 looks at the transition of the US-Japan relationship from war to peace and the impact of Japan's integration into the American cold war imperium. Part 4 examines the question of war crimes, war crimes trials, and the long afterlife of World War Two in public memory in Asia.

Learning to be a good historian is a lifelong process. We begin this journey by improving the following skill sets:

- Note taking and working with your notes to ask historical questions
- Critical evaluation of primary and secondary sources; working with sources
- Generating bibliographies
- Making historical arguments and using evidence
- Writing compelling and coherent essays
- Making effective presentations
- Peer review and constructive critique
- Developing effective reading strategies to synthesize complex historical material

This course satisfies the Comm-B General Education Requirement and is offered for 4 credits. This means we meet for 4 hours of class time per week. It carries the expectation that you will spend an average of 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of 8 hours per week for reading, writing, research, and participating in small working groups. There are no prerequisites for this course.

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, 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 Writing Center guide to [Quoting and Paraphrasing](#) and a terrific [resource list](#) from the Journalism School.

Note on use of AI

While AI tools have uses, they are often sloppy and error-prone, for instance “hallucinating” fake historical events and sources. Moreover, to use them is to skip out on the work that will get you the most benefit from this class. This course will exercise your ability to write and reason about complex ideas and events. Practicing core skills of argumentation, close reading, and writing will enhance your abilities as a student, and in every field that comes after. We will discuss appropriate and inappropriate uses in class. **Include an AI statement with all your writing assignments stating if and how you used AI.** (This does not include discussion posts).

Grading Scale

A (92.50+); AB (87.50-92.49); B (82.50-87.49); BC (77.50-82.49); C (69.50-77.49); D (60-69.49); F (Below 60)

Assignments and Evaluation

- **Writing Assignments/ 50% of final grade**
 - 20 Minute Read (20 points)
 - Topic description & annotated bibliography (20 points)
 - Thesis paragraph & paper outline (30 points)
 - Reverse/revision outline of first draft (10 points)
 - 2500-3000 word essay (40 points)
- **Attendance & Participation/ 20% of final grade**
 - Lecture attendance (28 points)
 - Participation in discussion sections (28 points)
 - In case of illness, contact instructor for excused absence
- **Discussion Posts/ 15% of final grade**
 - Weekly discussion posts (39 points)

- **Class Presentations & Peer Review/ 10% of final grade**
 - 2 presentations (20 points)
 - Peer review (10 points)
- **History Lab 5% of final grade**
 - 2 required visits to History Lab (10 points)

Descriptions and Due dates for Assignments

“20 minute read” See instructions on canvas.

Topic description & annotated bibliography See instructions on canvas.

Thesis and argument outline See instructions on canvas.

Reverse/ revision outline See instructions on canvas.

Final essay Your essay should be 10-12 pages, or 2500-3000 words (word count may include footnotes and bibliography). Use at least 5 secondary sources and 1 primary source, and document these using footnotes and a bibliography of works cited following the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). (A minimum of three of your secondary sources must be historical monographs.)

Optional first draft Professor Young will read/comment on first drafts submitted in hard copy—bring to class by **Nov 25**

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 instructors. Please be respectful and responsible to all of us by arriving on time. If you are sick, please stay home and get well. Email your instructors for an excused absence that day.

Discussion board There is a discussion board for the entire class, which we will use to share reactions to readings, progress on research papers, and other class assignments. Keep up with weekly prompts on canvas. Posts are due Mondays at midnight.

Presentations One of the learning outcomes of this class is to improve public speaking. Students will work in teams of 4-5 people to prepare presentations before the entire class. 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.

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 ideas, arguments and outlines for the final essay. One peer review session will require written feedback and will be graded.

History Lab You are required to make at least two visits to the History Lab to help you with your essay. The History Lab is a fantastic resource for moving your writing skills to the next level. History Lab is staffed with expert history PhD students who 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](#) to schedule an appointment with a Lab TA or to find writing tips, guides, and resources. Tip: make sure you schedule your appointments early, as slots fill up at the end of the semester. Don't wait until the last week of class to sign up.

Document your meeting by submitting the date and person you met with, as well as a brief summary of discussion.

Reading Assignments at a Glance

Part I: introduction (Weeks 1-2)

- ❖ Week 1
 - Watch [Wings of Defeat](#) (90 minutes)
- ❖ Week 2
 - John Dower, "Victors and Vanquished" in *Embracing Defeat*, 33-89

Part II: the bomb & the atomic era (Weeks 3-7)

- ❖ Week 3
 - John Dower, "The Bombed," *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, 116-142.
 - NAKAZAWA Keiji, [Barefoot Gen, Vol. 1](#)
- ❖ Week 4
 - John Hersey, [Hiroshima](#) (any edition or online)
 - Barton Bernstein, "introduction," *The Atomic Bomb: the Critical Issues*, vii-xix
 - Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 3-26
- ❖ Week 5
 - Watch [Atomic Café](#) (86 minutes) and read ["The Atomic Café"](#)
- ❖ Week 6
 - Watch [Gojira](#) (96 minutes) and read William Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind*, 13-42
 - Visit MIT Visualizing Cultures: ["Ground Zero 1945"](#) - pictures by atomic bomb survivors.
- ❖ Week 7-8
 - no reading, prepare presentations

Part III: Cold War and beyond (Weeks 8-12)

- ❖ Week 9
 - Bruce Cumings, "Japan's Position in the World System" in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed., Andrew Gordon, 34-63
 - Andrew Levidis, "Politics in a Fallen Empire: Kishi Nobusuke and the Making of Conservative Hegemony in Japan", in *In the Ruins of the Japanese Empire*, ed., Barak Kushner, 161-184
 - Koji Taira, "Dialectics of Economic Growth, National Power and Distributive Struggles" in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed., Andrew Gordon, 167-186
- ❖ Week 10
 - Oguma Eiji, "Japan's 1968: A Collective Response to Economic Growth in an Age of Turmoil", *Asia-Pacific Journal*, 13.12 (March 2015) 1-27
 - Nick Kapur, "The Japanese Student Movement in the Cold War Crucible, 1945-1972", *Asia-Pacific Journal*, 20.14 (July 2022) 1-25
 - Carol Gluck, "The Idea of Showa", *Daedalus* (119, 3) 1-26
- ❖ Week 11
 - Watch [Nanjing: Memory and Oblivion](#) (88 minutes)
- ❖ Week 12
 - Watch [Grave of the Fireflies](#) (90 minutes)

Part IV: war crimes and postimperial Asia (Weeks 13-14)

- ❖ Week 13
 - John Dower, “Victor’s Justice; Loser’s Justice” and “Remembering the War Criminals; Forgetting Their Crimes” in *Embracing Defeat*, 443-485, 508-521.
 - Kūichi Fujiwara, “Hiroshima, Nanjing, and Yasukuni” *Age of Hiroshima*, 201-218
- ❖ Week 14
 - Laura Hein, “Savage Irony: The Imaginative Power of the ‘Comfort Women’ in the 1990s”, *Gender and History*, 336-372
 - Leo Ching, “Anti-Japanism and Pro-Japanism in East Asia” in Ching, *Anti-Japan: the Politics of Sentiment in Postcolonial East Asia*, 1-18

Class Schedule

PART 1: INTRODUCTION (Sept 3-12)

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| Week 1 | <p>1. <i>introduction</i></p> <p><u>discussion section:</u> self introductions; note taking</p> |
| Week 2 | <p>1. “<i>the loser’s perspective on WW2</i>”; <i>note taking and using notes</i></p> <p>2. “<i>from war to peace</i>”; <i>primary versus secondary sources</i></p> <p><u>discussion section:</u> Dower reading/ Wings of Defeat; big ideas; asking questions</p> |

PART 2: THE BOMB & THE ATOMIC ERA (Sept 15-October 24)

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|--------|---|
| Week 3 | <p>1. <i>Film screening: Hellfire (58 minutes)</i></p> <p>2. <i>research topics & online search techniques</i></p> <p><u>discussion section:</u> discuss reading; introduce paper topics</p> |
| Week 4 | <p>1. “<i>the decision to drop the bomb (in real time)</i>”; <i>stack browsing as search technique</i></p> <p>2. <i>library trip</i></p> <p><u>discussion section:</u> readings; explore research topics</p> |
| Week 5 | <p>1. <i>the experience of the bomb in Japan; the 20 minute read</i></p> <p>2. <i>the morality of the bomb in America; primary materials in context: Barefoot Gen and Hiroshima</i></p> <p><u>discussion section:</u> library visit to work on bibliographies</p> |
| Week 6 | <p>1. “<i>Atomic Café and the culture of fear</i>”; <i>introduce topic and bibliography assignment; primary materials—the wide world of possibilities</i></p> <p>2. “<i>Godzilla & 1950s Japan</i>”; <i>identifying primary materials for research: using the AM database</i></p> <p><u>discussion section:</u> work on presentations/ discuss readings</p> |

20 minute read due Friday, Oct 10

Week 7

Group presentations

discussion section: finding primary source for paper

Week 8

Group presentations

discussion section: workshop topics and bibliography.

presentation reflection due Friday, Oct 24

PART 3: COLD WAR AND BEYOND (Oct 27-Nov 21)

Week 9

1. *"occupation and reform"; making good arguments (workshop thesis)*
2. *"The Postwar Settlement and Its Discontents"; working with outlines"*

discussion section: working with outlines using readings/
presentations

topic and bibliography due Monday, October 27

Week 10

1. *Japan in the Cold War Imperium"; work on presentations*
2. *"Growthism and its Discontents"; work on presentations*

discussion section: discuss readings

Week 11

Group presentations

discussion section: workshop argument outlines and organization

**thesis paragraph and outline due Friday, Nov 14 (upload a
copy to peer review folder)**

Week 12

Group presentations

discussion section: **peer review workshop** on thesis paragraph
and outline; footnotes and bibliography

peer reviews due Monday, Nov 17

PART 4: WAR CRIMES & POST-IMPERIAL ASIA (Nov 24-Dec 10)

Week 13

1. *"Nanjing Massacre in real time"; discuss films: aggressor consciousness &
victim consciousness*

no discussion section: Thanksgiving break

**optional: first draft for instructor feedback due by
Tuesday, Nov 25: bring a hard copy to class**

Week 14

1. *“War Crimes & the Tokyo trial”*;
2. *“The Tokyo Trial and the Verdict of History; reverse outlines/ revision outlines*

discussion section: discuss readings

Week 15

1. *Guest lecture: The emperor in history and memory*

discussion section: workshop final papers

final paper & reverse/revision outline due Saturday, Dec 13