

Hist. 206-404
Fall 2006
Thurs., 1:30-4:30
Towne 307

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Greater East Asia War

This seminar will explore the Second World War from the perspective of modern Japan. A major source of popular assumptions about the peculiarities of Japanese history and culture, the chronicle of Japanese war and empire building from 1931 to 1945 will be examined from several angles—political, military, social, cultural and intellectual. What was the basis and form of Japanese war and empire building in these years? What was the meaning of “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity”? To what extent do the symbol of a divine emperor, kamikaze pilots and the record of Japanese atrocities distinguish Japan from other belligerents in the 20th and 21st centuries? What is the real and imagined legacy of the “Greater East Asia War” in Japan? In what ways may the Japanese war experience of 1931 to 1945 inform our understanding of the current “war on terror”? We will take a consciously comparative thematic tour of the 1931 to 1945 years (empire, race, war, memory, etc.) in an effort to shed light upon both the history of modern Japan and the more general record of war and empire building in the 20th century.

Objectives

The course is divided into three parts, each of which is designed to expose you to a critical facet of historical inquiry. Readings in Part I will introduce you to the basic history and historiography of the Greater East Asia War. We will survey some major events in the history of the war and discuss the different ways in which historians have treated those events.

Part II will look at various themes within an explicitly comparative context. How unique was Japan’s record of empire, fascism and atrocities and Japanese conceptions of race and suicide? In light of the history of other belligerent powers, how much of Japan’s war experience may we attribute to culture?

Part III will highlight the primary source material used by historians to assess the Greater East Asia War: the letters, memoirs and oral histories of participants in the events. These are designed to give you a sense of how contemporaries viewed their world and to develop the critical skills needed to interpret primary sources.

Texts

Please purchase at the Pennsylvania Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street (215-222-7600):

Terence S. Kirk, *The Secret Camera: A Marine's Story: Four Years as a POW* (2005)
Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2000)
John Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun* (1984)
John Dower, *War without Mercy* (1986)
Hiroo Onoda, *No Surrender: My Thirty-Year War* (1999)
Ôe Kenzaburô, *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* (1958)

A good portion of our readings are in article form, accessible on the course website. They are numbered below by the order in which they appear in the syllabus and on the website.

Requirements

There are three components of your grade, which break down as follows.

	<u>Points</u>	<u>% grade (roughly)</u>
1) Class attendance and participation (5 pts each session X 12)	60 pts	35
2) One class discussion	20 pts	12
2) Three 6-8 pg thought papers on assigned topics (30 pts each)	90 pts	53

Course itinerary

Week I

9/7 Intro

Part I: Historiography of the Greater East Asia War

Week II

9/14 Japanese Atrocities in Living Memory
Kirk, *The Secret Camera*

Week III

9/21 Outline of an Empire
Goto, *Tensions of Empire*, chps I, III, IV [1]

Week IV

9/28 Emperor
Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 1-530

Week V

10/5 Empire, Strategy and Ideology
Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun*

Week VI

10/12 Wartime Culture
Ben-ami Shillony, "East versus West," pp. 134-171 [2]
Barak Kushner, "A Funny Thing Happened to Me on the Way to the Front," pp. 85-116 [3]

10/13 **Paper #1 due**

Part II: Comparative History of the Greater East Asia War

Week VII

10/19 Comparative Empire and Fascism
Lewis H. Gann, "Western and Japanese Colonialism: Some Preliminary Comparisons," pp. 497-525 [4]
Peter Duus, Daniel Okamoto, "Comment: Fascism and the History of Pre-War Japan: The Failure of a Concept," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1. (Nov., 1979), pp. 65-76 [5]

Week VIII

10/26 Comparative Race
Dower, *War without Mercy*

Week IX

11/2 Comparative Suicide

Richard O'Neill, *Suicide Squads: WW II*, pp. 18-24; 37-9; 54-73; 76-84; 122-131; 134-44; 189-204; 217-33; 251-9 [6]Week X

11/9 Comparative Atrocities

Robert Gellately, Ben Kiernan, "The Study of Mass Murder and Genocide," pp. 2-26 [7]

Gavan McCormack, "Reflections on Modern Japanese History in the Context of the Concept of 'Genocide,'" in Robert Gellately, ed., *The Specter of Genocide* (2003), pp. 265-86 [8]11/10 **Paper #2 due****Part III: Voices from Japan**Week XI

11/16 No Surrender

Onoda, *No Surrender*Week XII11/23 **Thanksgiving Break**Week XIII

11/30 Dying for a Cause

Yutaka Yokota, *Suicide Submarine!*, pp. 9-99; 167-207; 236-56 [9]Rikihei Inoguchi, *The Divine Wind*, pp. 196-208 [10]Week XIV

12/7 Japanese Memories of War

Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 533-688Oe, *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids*12/8 **Paper #3 due**