

Atomic Histories: Trinity, Hiroshima, Nagasaki

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Atomic Histories: Trinity, Hiroshima, Nagasaki
History 197, Section 11
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Course Description

Few events define the modern era with the clarity of these three: the detonation of the world's first atomic device in Alamogordo, New Mexico on July 16, 1945, the destruction of Hiroshima on August 6 and, three days later, the use of another and final nuclear weapon on Nagasaki. This course explores those events and their legacies. It has two broad goals, and is organized into multiple areas of inquiry.

The first and most specific goal is to engage a series of questions about the development, use and human impact of the first atomic devices. We will examine the imperatives that drove the Manhattan Project, the decision making processes in Japan and the United States that led to the use of the weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the subsequent efforts in both countries to reflect on those decisions and their consequences. A second and more general goal is to engage students in the practice of historical analysis and writing history through a rigorous examination of a wide range of documentary, film, and literary "evidence" touching on the issues described above.

The areas of inquiry that frame the course have chronological and thematic components. The first, Trinity, combines an exploration of the scientific and technological developments that made it possible to construct an atomic weapon with an analysis of the new ideological and diplomatic realities that made it possible to use one. Here the focus will be on the ethical and personal dilemmas confronting the physicists involved in the Manhattan Project and the nature of the US-Japanese conflict by the summer of 1945. US and Japanese planning for an end to the war, the decisions to drop the bombs, the process of surrender, and initial efforts to come to terms with what happened in the target cities are also explored. The focus in this unit will be on a careful analysis of multiple layers of historical evidence in an attempt to construct a clear narrative of events, and on how best to use that narrative in locating responsibility and moral certainty. The second section of the course, Hiroshima/Nagasaki introduces students to the construction of the public histories of the atomic bombings through the lenses of fiction, film, memorial sites, and museums. By analyzing how public memories are created and sustained, this part of the course confronts the relationships between national identity, history, and just how we choose to remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Course Requirements

This course is intended for upper level students comfortable with the seminar format and workload. There are two varieties of written assignment. Students will write two short papers (1000-1500 words) and one longer research paper of approximately 20 pages. The

shorter papers will center on topics associated with a given week's reading. These papers will be distributed to the seminar at least twenty four hours in advance of each session, and with the authors' guidance will serve as frameworks for discussion that week. In addition, seminar participants will bring to the session two copies of a brief (no more than 250 word) critique of each paper.

Students will also pursue an original research project, culminating in a paper of at least twenty pages, or its equivalent.

Resources and Texts

The course's WebCT component includes links to sites with primary documents, analyses and narratives dealing with issues of interest to the seminar. It also provides access to more mundane administrative information.

Texts

Bird, Kai, and Lawrence Lifschultz. *Hiroshima's Shadow*. Pamphleteer's Press, 1998.

Frank, Richard B. *Downfall*. Penguin, 1999.

Hersey, John. *Hiroshima*. Random House, 1985.

Ibuse, Masuji. *Black Rain; a Novel*. Kodansha International Ltd., 1969.

Rhodes, Richard. *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*. Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Yoneyama, Lisa. *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialectics of Memory*. University of California Press, 1999.

Films

After the Cloud Lifted: Hiroshima's Stories of Recovery.

Masaki Mori, director, *Barefoot Gen*.

Jon Else, director, *The Day After Trinity*.

Sueo Ito, director, *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*.

Inoshirō Honda, director, *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*.

John Junkerman and John Dower, *Hellfire: A Journey from Hiroshima*.

Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped.

Frank Capra, director, *Know Your Enemy: Japan*.

Rain of Ruin.

Seminar Schedule

Trinity

Wednesday, January 28 Introductions

Viewing in class: *Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped*.

Wednesday, February 4 Contexts

Readings

Begin Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*.
Richard B. Frank, *Downfall*, to 116.
Viewing assignment: Frank Capra, director, *Know Your Enemy: Japan*.
Viewing in class: *Japanese Devils*.

Wednesday, February 11 Beginnings

Readings

Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, to p. 393.

Wednesday, February 18 The Manhattan Project

Readings

Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, to p. 678.

Viewing assignment: Jon Else, director, *The Day After Trinity*.

Wednesday, February 25 Decisions

Readings

Richard B. Frank, *Downfall*, pp. 117-251.

Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird, eds. *Hiroshima's Shadow*, pp. 501-560.

Wednesday, March 3 Surrender

Readings

Richard B. Frank, *Downfall*, pp. 252-360.

Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird, eds. *Hiroshima's Shadow*, pp. 5-62, 78-140.

Viewing assignment: *Rain of Ruin/Hiroshima/Nagasaki*

Wednesday, March 10 Images

Readings

John W. Dower, "The Bombed: Hiroshimas and Nagasakis In Japanese Memory," in Michael Hogan, ed. *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, pp. 116-142. (Reserve)

Kyoko Hirano, "Depiction of the Atomic Bombings in Japanese Cinema during the U.S. Occupation Period," in Broderick ed., *Hibakusha Cinema*, pp. 103-119. (Reserve)

Abé Mark Nornes, "The Body at the Center - The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki," in Broderick ed., *Hibakusha Cinema*, pp. 120-159. (Reserve)

Viewing Assignment: Sueo Ito, director, *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, and John Junkerman and John Dower, *Hellfire: A Journey from Hiroshima*.

Wednesday, March 17 Witnessing

Readings

Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, pp. 679-747.

John Hersey, *Hiroshima*, entire.

Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird, eds. *Hiroshima's Shadow*, pp. 63-77, 443-452.

Begin Ibuse Masuji, *Black Rain*.

Viewing Assignment: *After the Cloud Lifted: Hiroshima's Stories of Recovery*.

Wednesday, March 24 Representation

Readings

Ibuse Masuji, *Black Rain*, entire.

Viewing assignment: Masaki Mori, director, *Barefoot Gen*.

Wednesday, April 7 (Re)Writing Histories

Readings

Re-read Hersey, *Hiroshima*.

Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird, eds. *Hiroshima's Shadow*, pp. 141-311.

Wednesday, April 14 *Enola Gay* and Public Memory

Readings

Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird, eds. *Hiroshima's Shadow*, pp. 317-409.

Wednesday, April 21 Memory, Museums, Monuments

Readings

Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*. Entire.

Wednesday, April 28 Imagined Disasters

Readings

Chon Noriega, "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When Them! is U.S." *Cinema Journal* 27:1 (Fall 1987):63-77. (Reserve)

Susan Napier, "Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from Godzilla to Akira," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19:2 (Summer 1993): 327-351.

Jerome F. Shapiro, "1945-2001: Japan's Atomic Bomb Cinema," in *Atomic Bomb Cinema*, pp. 251-305. (Reserve)

Viewing assignment: Inoshirō Honda, director, *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*.