In partial fulfillment of course requirements, student engaged in an experience of the Topaz Internment Camp outside Delta, Utah.

The following slides present their impressions of the images from the internment camp.

The views expressed in this presentation are from the students enrolled in this course and are not to be considered representative of the university.

August 8th-13th, 2005
Over 120,000 Japanese-Americans, two thirds of whom are U.S. citizens, are uprooted from their west coast homes and incarcerated by their own government. It is 1942, wartime hysteria is at a peak. They are imprisoned in ten inland concentration camps where they remain behind barbed wire, under suspicion and armed guards for up to 3 1/2 years. Topaz is one of the ten camps. □ Without hearings or trials, this act of injustice is based solely on the color of their skin and the country of their origin. America's fear and distrust of these citizens—precipitated by Japan's attack upon Pearl Harbor—is placated. □ Lost within this rush to judgment is the denial of constitutional rights, major losses of personal property and the labelling of its own citizens as enemy. Ironically, though this mass incarceration is spearheaded by thoughts of disloyalty, not a single case of espionage against the U.S. is ever discovered. □ Indeed, the 442nd RCT and 100th Battalion, composed entirely of young Japanese-American boys (many of whom volunteer from internment camps), suffer major war casualties and go on to become the U.S. Army's most highly-decorated combat unit in its history. □ Topaz is closed in October of 1945. The memory of Topaz remains a tribute to a people whose faith and loyalty was steadfast—while America's had faltered.
Topaz housed internees in 432 barracks. The families were assigned apartments based on the number of people. I couldn’t imagine four people living in a 20 x 15” apartment. My studio apartment is a palace for me compared to this.

-Prasad
We visited the smallest barrack units in mid-summer of 2005 and I was blown away by how uncomfortably hot and cramped it was. After 3 minutes I was so uncomfortable I had to find relief in the 90° plus weather outside. The Japanese Americans spent at least three years in the same building.

-Ryan
After the realization hit me that people were forced to live there for years, I had to quickly leave the barrack to prevent bursting into tears.

-Stephanie
The internees were forced to become thieves if they wanted any furniture (even a chair), besides the issued metal framed bed, three-inch mattress and two stiff, thin, itchy wool blankets.

-Kelly
Something that really impacted me is that how three people had to share a room because I am spoiled and it would have been very hard, especially in summer when it gets hot.

-Humphrey
How little privacy for a newly married couple to be separated by this screen in the same apartment where the rest of the family lived.

-Gayathri
White mounds of alkaline dirt stand outside the camp. After the internees left, refrigerators and typewriters were dumped in a hole there and covered up. That piece of history is buried, hidden, almost lost.

-Melissa
If we look at the sky and not our feet then we’ll survive.” These words exemplify the strong determination to go on and see through it no matter how helpless and hopeless the circumstances are.

-Vineet
The Japanese are known for their beautiful, tended gardens and immaculately designed landscapes. In the Topaz internment camp, a land void of blossoming flowers or various plant life, the Japanese internees made gardens out of the only material plentiful in the camp. Desert rocks.

-Tammy
The desert greeted them warmly. Soldiers, stillness, scorpions, sadness, sand.

-Lucas
Even as prisoners, Japanese women used hair curlers, lipstick and jewelry to look beautiful and preserve some kind of normal life, just like you do...

Gayathri
Standing at Topaz and hearing once again the quote about “surviving by looking at the sky instead of their feet” made an impact on me. Seeing how the sky looked and how flat the land was in person was a surprise. Also, I remember hearing in school once that when being scolded, Japanese children look downwards instead of making eye contact with the person scolding them so it makes me wonder if it was saying to not be ashamed and to not let the Americans attitude affect them.

-Mike
The first families arrived to find Topaz camp wasn’t finished. The men were put to work building the perimeter fence. Twelve dollars a month for manual work. They penned themselves in.

-Mary