

HISTORY 4821: SECOND WORLD WAR in ASIA (DHA) Fall 2008

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Office hours: Tuesday, 10 am-noon or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course, of course, serves as an upper-division history elective (“world”) for History Majors, History Teaching Majors, History Minors, History Teaching Minors, and non-History Majors (counts as DHA).

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The objectives of this course are simple:

- 1. To increase the student’s knowledge of the key global conflict in the Twentieth Century in Asia (CBI theater, Pacific theater).**
- 2. To expand the student’s appreciation of the heroism and sacrifice made by millions of ordinary people (adults and children) in this devastating conflict, as well as an awareness of the evil, depraved acts committed by both sides (Axis and Allied)**
- 3. To acquire a better understanding of the military efforts on both sides, Axis and Allied**
- 4. To develop insights into human nature through examining the experiences of prisoners of war, soldiers, ordinary citizens, in a conflict which John Dower calls, “A War without Mercy.”**
- 5. To have the opportunity to examine and interpret primary sources from the period.**

COURSE RATIONALE:

Studying the Asian aspects of World War II is especially important, I think, because we are facing a “Pacific Century” in the 21st century. China, in 2008, is incredibly different from the China of WWII (for instance, site of the 2008 Olympics!!); the same is true for Korea, India, Indonesia and others. The stories of these various Asian people during WWII require our attention. Of course, time will be given to the American-Japanese conflict in the Pacific. But other stories should also be included. Moreover, Americans are still experiencing a “war on terrorism” which started with a surprising attack (on 9/11) much as the Americans experienced in 1941 at Pearl Harbor. We citizens of the 21st century need to learn from the survivors of the Second World War how to sacrifice, serve, endure, maintain hope, show understanding and forgiveness, etc. This empathy and role modeling that a study of World War II can give us are sorely needed today. Pearl Harbor (“A day that will live in infamy”—FDR) has new meaning to those Americans who have experienced 9/11. Atomic bombs ended WWII. One can only hope that atomic bombs do not end life as it is now known (via US, Russia, China, Israel, France, Britain, Pakistan, India—those who have nuclear capabilities—or via Iran, North Korea, Iraq, Al-Qaeda, Brazil, Syria—those who have the potential or want the potential). The emergence of a powerful China is still another compelling reason for today’s students to study World War II in Asia, so today’s student can appreciate the enormous change which the Chinese people have experienced between World War II and the Twenty-First Century.

TEXTBOOKS:

Axell, Kamakazie

Iriye, Second World War

Kakehashi, So Sad to Fall in Battle

McKerra, China's Transformation, 1900-1949

Textbooks used last spring are still on reserve and can be used:

H.P. Willmott, *The Second War in the Far East* (this is part of the Smithsonian Series of Warfare under the general editorship of John Keegan, famous British military historian).

Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*

M. G. Sheftall, *Blossoms in the Wind: Human Legacies of the Kamikaze* (hopefully)

Other books not used last spring but on reserve:

John Dower, *War without Mercy*

Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*

Online Course Reserve: I will include articles from a variety of books online also

REQUIREMENTS:

- 1. Read your textbook assignments (even if no written response is required).**
- 2. During the course, there may be an unspecified number of class-designated reading/writing assignments and in-class written responses to various material (my elastic clause)**
- 3. Mid-Term and Final exam (date of final: Fri., Dec. 12 at 7:30-9:20)**

Note: If you know a WWII veteran who would be willing to come and talk to our class (any time), please let me know. Past classes have really enjoyed hearing from veterans.

Warning: Doing "justice" to a course on WWII would require at least 20 semesters (if not a life time!!). I will not be able to please most of you. Thus, you must be willing to utilize your own time to learn more about WWII and not rely wholly on class time. However, if you have suggestions, comments, complaints about the class, do not hesitate to let me know. I can only assume that all is well unless you tell me otherwise. While I do not believe in "exams" as an effective means of learning, I must resort to that wicked tool—owing to a teaching overload this semester.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (i.e., subject to frequent change—depending on whether we can get a speaker for a certain day; current events shape our agenda for the day, etc.)

FIRST WEEK : Background to War, 1930s; Leaders and Resources

SECOND WEEK Japanese expansion (1931-1937)

THIRD WEEK : 1940-41: US reaction to Japanese expansion in China; Chinese reaction; Japanese reaction

FOURTH WEEK : 1940-41: Japanese expansion throughout southeast Asia (Vietnam, Dutch East Indies, etc.); attack on Pearl Harbor; Soviet-Japanese relations

FIFTH WEEK : 1942 : CBI theater

SIXTH WEEK : 1942: Midway, Guadalcanal; Aleutians; New Guinea

SEVENTH WEEK: Japanese strengths and weaknesses in 1942; Allied strengths & weaknesses

EIGHTH WEEK : 1942-43: Japanese homefront; Japanese POWs;

Japanese occupation of Dutch East Indies, Hong Kong, Singapore, Philippines, Indochina

NINTH WEEK: Turning points in CBI & Pacific

TENTH WEEK : 1943-44: Nationalist-Communist struggle in China

ELEVENTH WEEK : 1944: Allied successes in Pacific, Burma and China

TWELFTH WEEK : 1945: Iwo Jima and Okinawa

THIRTEENTH WEEK : Firebombing of Japan; Soviet entry into war

FOURTEENTH WEEK : Atomic bomb debate

FIFTEENTH WEEK : Final Exam Week (Dec. 8-12); Final Exam

I will provide a reading schedule on the first day of class.