

The Atomic Bomb and the Nuclear Age

Mark Selden
Cornell University

Course Reading

The following paperback books have been ordered at the campus bookstore.

Books

Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds., Living With the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age. M.E. Sharpe.

John Hersey, Hiroshima. Knopf.

Michael Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory. Cambridge

Kenzaburo Oe, Hiroshima Notes. Marion Boyers.

Kyoko Selden and Mark Selden, eds. the Atomic Bomb. Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki. M.E. Sharpe.

Supplementary Book

John Dower, War Without Mercy. Race and Power in the Pacific War. Pantheon.

Course Description

This course explores the meaning of the nuclear age and the atomic bomb from multiple perspectives with particular reference to the United States and Japan as well as the global context of the issues. It considers the impact of the making and using of the atomic bomb on American and Japanese societies including its political, social, historical, literary and artistic resonances, and the responses it evoked. We range from the master narratives of nuclear power politics to the personal narratives and responses of a range of victims and citizens in both the United States and Japan. We consider the relationship between the atomic bomb and the cold war and inquire into the significance of the apparent decline in interest in nuclear issues (but not of nuclear fantasies?) in the post cold war era.

Students are asked to prepare a term paper on a question related to one of the central themes of the course. A four page précis and preliminary bibliography of your paper is due in class in the week of October 7 following e-mail proposal and office hour discussion of the subject. Term papers are due at my office at noon on December 19. It is good to begin exploring ideas for a term paper within the first two to three weeks and to let me have a paragraph (by e-mail at ms44@cornell.edu) concerning your idea as soon as possible, to be followed up by a discussion. There is no prescribed length for the term paper, but twenty pages is a length that may be appropriate for working through an important problem.

Students are expected to report on assigned readings and films and to participate in class discussion. Please complete all reading for each week prior to the first class of the week. Films will normally be shown in the second meeting of the week in class. In some instances, you may be asked to view the film prior to class. Films will be available for viewing in the audiovisual center at any time in the case of those in the possession of Binghamton University. Films and videos provided for rental will be available for the three days prior to class.

Grades are based on evaluation of the **quality** of class performance in discussion and presentation, précis, and term paper.

Possible Research Topics (to stimulate ideas, not to restrict choices)

1. How many people died, and how many were injured, as a result of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: who (e.g. nationality), when (immediately, within six months etc.), where (distance from the hypocenter), why (blast, radiation, psychological trauma)?

2. What is known about the medical, genetic, and psychological effects of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? What important issues remain unresolved and why?
3. Why did the Truman administration use the bomb at Hiroshima? Nagasaki?
4. Assess the dominant positions in the debate over the decision to drop the atomic bombs.
5. Why are the issues surrounding the dropping of the atomic bomb and World War II generally still so intense half a century after the end of World War II?
6. What is to be learned from a review of Japanese and American literatures (or visual and other arts) on the atomic bombing?
7. Assess the impact of anti-nuclear movements on the development of nuclear power in the course of the Cold War and after.
8. Make the case for (against) nuclear weapons (and/or nuclear power).
9. How has historical memory of the bomb in the United States and Japan differed? Assess both the master narratives and critical narratives in both countries and explain the reasons for the differences between them.
10. Explain Japan's decision to surrender.
11. What has been the impact of the decision to use the bomb on the subsequent course of the Cold War?
12. Did the atomic bomb save lives? Japanese? American? Assess the estimates in light of conditions in August, 1945 and the projected November, 1945 U.S. landing.
13. In what ways may the period since the final years of World War II legitimately be described as the nuclear age?
14. In what ways, if any, can themes of racism illuminate atomic issues?

Course Schedule

1. The Pacific War: Race, Power, and the Clash of Empires. 9.4

- a. Dower, War Without Mercy, 1-15, 77-93, 203-33, 293-317. For pleasure and reflection: the illustrations, 181-200.
- b. Yuki Tanaka, Hidden Horrors. Japanese War Crimes in World War II, 1-10, 134-54, 160-65. [Supplement: 197-215]
Supplement
- a. Christopher Thorne, The Issue of War. States, Societies, and the Far Eastern Conflict of 1941-1945, 13-54.

2. Before the Bomb: Air Power, Ethics and Atrocities in World War II. 9.11,9.16

- a. Michael Sherry, The Rise of American Air Power, 256-93, 69-70.
- b. Mark Selden, "Before the Bomb: The 'Good War', Air Power and the Logic of Mass Destruction," Contention 5,1, Fall 1995, 113-32.
- c. Eric Markusen and David Kopf, The Holocaust and Strategic Bombing. Genocide and Total War in the 20th Century, 55-78, xi-xiv.

Film: Grave of the Fireflies (Note: Films subject to change both of title and time. Films in possession of Binghamton University will be available for previewing at educational communications throughout the semester; rented films will be available only a few days before class.)

3. The Atomic Bomb and the End of the Pacific War. 9.23

- a. Henry Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," Harper's Magazine (February, 1947) in Paul Baker, ed., The Atomic Bomb. The Great Decision, 2nd edition (1976), 13-28.
- b. Samuel Walker, "The Decision to Use the Bomb: A Historiographical Update," in Michael Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory, 11-37.
- c. Gar Alperovitz, The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb, 3-7, 627-42.
- d. Robert Lifton and Greg Mitchell, Hiroshima in America, 3-83

Film: Fat Man and Little Boy (Excerpts in class). Starring Paul Newman. 127 minutes (excerpts in class)

4. The Atomic Bomb, The Nuclear Age and the Cold War. 9.30 and 10.7

- a. Barton Bernstein, "Understanding the Atomic Bomb and the Japanese Surrender: Missed

Opportunities, Little-Known Near Disasters, and Modern Memory," in Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory, 38-79.

b. Herbert Bix, "Japan's Delayed Surrender: A Reinterpretation," in Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory, 80-115.

c. Robert James Maddox, Weapons for Victory. The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Year Later, 1-5, 147-64.

Film: Hiroshima and Nagasaki if available.

A term paper précis is due in class week of October 7.

5. Human Consequences of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1): Hibakusha and Documentary Accounts 10.14

a. "Citizens Memoirs," "Pictures by Atomic Bomb Survivors," "Children's Voices," in Kyoko Selden and Mark Selden, eds., The Atomic Bomb: Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 173-233.

b. Mark Selden, "Introduction: The U.S., Japan and the Atomic Bomb," in The Atomic Bomb: Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki, xi-xxxv.

c. The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings, 335-84, 395-409, 30-50.

Film: Them. 89 minutes. Viewing and discussion of film on October 16 in absence of instructor.

6. Human Consequences of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (2): Japanese and American Literary Representations. 10.21

a. Novellas by Agawa Hiroyuki, Hayashi Kyoko and Nakayama Shiro, and poems in Kyoko Selden and Mark Selden, eds., The Atomic Bomb: Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 3-55, 86-113, 117-40, 152-55.

b. John Hersey, Hiroshima.

c. Lane Fenrich: "Mass Death in Miniature," How Americans Became Victims of the Bomb," in Hein and Selden, eds., Living With the Bomb: 122-33.

Film: Imamura Shohei, Black Rain. 2 hours (excerpts). Based on the novel by Ibuse Masuji.

7. Human Consequences of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (3): Visual Representations. October 28

1. John Dower and John Junkerman, eds., The Hiroshima Murals: The Art of Iri Maruki and Toshi Maruki **AND/OR**

Japan Broadcasting Corporation, World Friendship Center in Hiroshima, Unforgettable Fire: Pictures Drawn by Atomic Bomb Survivors.

2. "Photographs," "Pictures by Atomic Bomb Survivors," Domon Ken, "The Boy Who Was a Fetus: The Death of Kajiyama Kenji," in Kyoko Selden and Mark Selden, eds., The Atomic Bomb: Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 113ff, 215ff, 159-69.

3. George Roeder, "Making Things Visible. Learning From the Censors, in Hein and Selden, Living With the Bomb, 73-99.

Film: Barefoot Gen.

8. The Bomb in Japanese and American Memory (1) 11.4

a. Laura Hein and Mark Selden, "Commemoration and Silence: Fifty Years of Remembering the Bomb in America and Japan," John Dower, "Triumphal and Tragic Narratives of the War in Asia," Yui Daizaburo, "Between Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima/Nagasaki: Nationalism and memory in Japan and the United States," in Hein and Selden, Living With the Bomb, 3-72.

b. Oe Kenzaburo, Hiroshima Notes.

Supplement

a. Oe Kenzaburo and Kim Chi Ha "An Autonomous Subject's Long Waiting, Coexistence," positions. east asia cultures critique 4,4, spring 1997.

Film: Atomic Cafe. 88 minutes

9. The Bomb in Japanese and American Memory (2). 11.11

a. John Dower, "The Bombed: Hiroshimas and Nagasakis in Japanese Memory," in Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory, 116-42.

- b. Monica Braw, "Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Voluntary Silence," Lisa Yoneyama, "Memory matters: Hiroshima's Korean Atom Bomb Memorial and the Politics of Ethnicity," Sodei Rinjiro, "Were We the Enemy? American Hibakusha," and Ellen Hammond, "Commemoration Controversies; The War, the Peace, and Democracy in Japan," in Hein and Selden, eds., Living With the Bomb, 155-259, 100-21.
- c. Mike Wallace, "Culture War, History Front," in Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., History Wars. The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past, 171-98.

Supplement:

- a. Norma Field, "War and Apology: Japan, Asia, the Fiftieth and After," positions: east asia cultures critique 4,4, spring 1997.
- b. John Dower, "Foreword," (manuscript) to Rinjiro Sodei, "Were We the Enemy?" (forthcoming Westview, 1998).

Film: Testament 89 minutes

10. Textbooks and the Bomb. 11.18 and 11.25

- a. Hein and Selden "Introduction" to "Textbook Nationalism, War and Citizenship" (draft).
- b. Asada Sadao, "The Mushroom Cloud and National Psyches: Japanese and American Perceptions of the Atomic Bomb Decision, 1945-1995," in Hein and Selden, eds. Living With the Bomb, 173-202.
- c. Samuel Walker, "History, Collective Memory and the Decision to Use the Bomb," in Hogan, Hiroshima in History and memory, 187-99.
- d. Hiro Inokuchi on the Japanese textbook controversy (draft).

Film: Dr. Strangelove. Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. 93 minutes.

11. The Bomb, Anti-war and Anti-nuclear Movements. 12.2

- a. Lawrence Wittner, "From the Ashes: World Peace Activism and the Movement in Japan," and "America's Nuclear Nightmare," in One World or None. A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, chs 3-4, 39-79.
- b. Daniel Ellsberg, "Introduction. A Call to Mutiny," in E.P. Thompson, Protest and Survive, i-xxviii.
- c. Michael Sherry, "Patriotic Orthodoxy and American Decline," in Hein and Selden, eds., Living With the Bomb, 134-54.
- d. Joseph Rotblat, "Past Attempts to Abolish Nuclear Weapons," and Carl Kaysen, Robert McNamara, and George Rathjens, "Nuclear Weapons After the Cold War," in Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, and Bhalchandra Udgaonkar, eds., A Nuclear-Weapon-Free World. Desirable? Feasible?, 17-51.

Supplement:

- a. Seimitsu Tachibana, "The Quest for a Peace Culture: The A-Bomb Survivors' Long Struggle and the New Movement for Redressing Foreign Victims of Japan's War," in Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory, 168-86.

Film: Akira Kurosawa, Dreams 42 minutes (excerpts)

12. Student Presentations of Papers and final discussion. 12.9

Reserve Book List

- Paul Baker, ed., The Atomic Bomb. The Great Decision
- Charles Chatfield and Peter van den Dungen, Peace Movements and Political Cultures
- The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings.
- John Dower, War Without Mercy. Race and Power in the Pacific War.
- John Dower and John Junkerman, eds., The Hiroshima Murals: The Art of Iri Maruki and Toshi Maruki
- Norma Field, In the Realm of a Dying Emperor. Japan at Century's End
- Hans Graetzer and Larry Browning, The Atomic Bomb. An Annotated Bibliography. 1992
- Michiko Hachiya, Hiroshima Diary. The Journal of a Japanese Physician, August 6-September 30, 1945
- John Halliday, A Political History of Japanese Capitalism
- Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds., Living With the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age
- John Hersey, Hiroshima

Michael Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory
Japan Broadcasting Corporation, World Friendship Center in Hiroshima, Unforgettable Fire: Pictures Drawn by Atomic Bomb Survivors
Wayne Lammers, Japanese A-Bomb Literature: An Annotated Bibliography. Wilmington College Peace Resource Center
Robert Lifton and Eric Markusen, The Genocidal Mentality. Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat
Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., History Wars. The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past
Robert James Maddox, Weapons for Victory. The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Year Later
Eric Markusen and David Kopf, The Holocaust and Strategic Bombing. Genocide and Total War in the 20th Century, 55-78, xi-xiv
Keiji Nakazawa, Barefoot Gen (two volumes)
Kenzaburo Oe, Hiroshima Notes. Marion Boyars
Richard Rhodes, The Making of the Atomic Bomb
Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, and Bhalchandra Udgaonkar, eds. A Nuclear-Weapon-Free World. Desirable? Feasible?
Ronald Schaeffer, Wings of Judgment. American Bombing in World War II.
Kyoko Selden and Mark Selden, eds., The Atomic Bomb. Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki
Mark Selden, "Before the Bomb: The 'Good War', Air Power and the Logic of Mass Destruction," Contention 5,1, Fall 1995
Michael Sherry, The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon
Yuki Tanaka, Hidden Horrors. Japanese War Crimes in World War II
E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith, eds., Protest and Survive
Christopher Thorne, The Issue of War. States, Societies and the Far Eastern Conflict of 1941-1945
John Treat, Writing Ground Zero. Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb
Lawrence Wittner, One World or None. The Struggle Against the Bomb