

## Ethnic Studies 103 (Fall 2000)

### Race , Nation, and Fractured Histories: Japan, Germany, and the U.S. from WWII

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Too often, discussions of the “excesses” and “crimes” of war take place with little actual knowledge of the events and complex issues they both represent and encompass. These events take place in the popular mind outside of a truly comparative historical framework, and without a deep interrogation of the processes of race- and nation-building that resulted in the “excesses” themselves. Without a more complex understanding of these processes, as well as the circumstances surrounding them, we can never understand the ways individuals, as members of nations, can be united and fused into a single “bundle” of iron rods - the *fasces* of Mussolini’s “fascism.”

Against the background knowledge of racial formations and major historical debates in the American context possessed by most students with some exposure to the Ethnic Studies curriculum, this course will take a closer look at the constructions of race and nation in Japan and Germany. Both countries, their constructions of race, as well as the historical lessons they have come to represent, are scarcely understood in anything but the simplest, most superficial historical terms. It is specifically through a close examination of the ways ideas of nation and race were constructed and used during WWII that we can hope to understand their changing meanings over time, as well as come to grips with contemporary attempts to represent them. Different historians differently choose what to remember, and what to forget. The historical issues seem to be growing increasingly significant, even as time continues its incessant march forward, away from the events themselves.

Especially for those who desire a broad base in the study of racial and national formation, the anatomy of supremacist ideologies, and the politics of historical representation, exposure to the major issues and concepts around these issues outside the strictly American context is essential.

The main historical questions with which this course will be concerned:

- 1) What constitutes a nation, and by extension, nationalism?
- 2) How was the idea of the nation actively constructed, reshaped, and reinforced in Germany and Japan during the period leading up to the World War II?
- 3) What role did race play in these conceptions of nation? How did these conceptions of the “elect nation” differ from each other in the cases of Germany and Japan, as well from the American case, with which Ethnic Studies students should already be familiar?
- 4) How did racial representations inform the waging of war, as well as the perpetration of war crimes, in all three countries in question?
- 5) Did Japan receive “a slap on the wrist” historically speaking, in comparison to Germany? Is this not in itself a reflection of a Eurocentric way of thinking about “war crimes” and their relative import?

- 6) In what ways have historical representations changed (or not changed) over time in Germany, Japan, and the United States, in relation to changing notions of nationality and their ideological bases?

MAIN TEXTS (readings from at least 50-75% of the book)

Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

Burleigh, Michael, and Wolfgang Wippermann. *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945*.

Buruma, Ian. *The Wages of Guilt : Memories of War in Germany and Japan*.

Dower, John. *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*.

Dower, John W. "Chapters 14-16." *Embracing Defeat : Japan in the Wake of World War II*. (405-523)

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners : Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*.

Hein, Laura Elizabeth, and Mark Selden. *Censoring History : Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*.

Linenthal, Edward Tabor, and Tom Engelhardt. *History Wars : The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*.

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS (To form a reader/packet)

Alperovitz, Gar. "Conclusion and Afterword." *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1995. 627-68.

Balibar, Etienne. "Racism and Nationalism." *Race, Nation, Class : Ambiguous Identities*. (37-68)

Fujitani, Takashi. "Inventing, Forgetting, Remembering: Toward a Historical Ethnography of the Nation-State." *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia : Representation and Identity*. (77-106)

Hobsbawm, Eric. "Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. (1-14)

Hurt, Michael. "New Exigencies and Old Ideologies: The Alien as Other in Paul Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers*" Unpublished paper, 1997.

Lukacs, John. "Preface, Chapters 1, 3-4." *The Hitler of History*. (xi-51, 76-127)

Sato, Kazuki. "'Same Language, Same Race': The Dilemma of *Kanbun* in Modern Japan." *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan : Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. (118-35)

Trevor-Roper, Hugh. "The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland." *The Invention of Tradition*. (15-42)

Weiner, Michael. "The Invention of Identity: Race and Nation in Pre-War Japan." *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan : Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. (96-117)

Young, Louise. "Rethinking Race for Manchukuo: Self and Other in the Colonial Context." *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan : Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Ed (158-76)

### VIDEO MATERIALS

*Know Your Enemy – Japan*, by Frank Capra (1945)

*Starship Troopers* (1997), by Paul Verhoeven

Superman Cartoons (*Jap O Tears*, *Secret Agent*, circa 1942-1945), by Max Fleischer

*Triumph of the Will* (1934?), by Leni Riefenstahl

*Godzilla*, 1954

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is designed to offer seniors a chance to become deeply involved in a specific topic, an opportunity to go into intellectual depth rather than breadth. As a seminar designed for upper division students, the load is heavier than most others. There will be intensive reading, equivalent to around a book per week, as well as video materials that will frequently be a part of that week's assignments. Students are expected to be prepared to be intellectually pushed and challenged in this course.

Course requirements include a short paper (6-8 pages) at midterm integrating the readings in a comparison between the "racial states" of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany while considering how well each case fits into the Anderson/Balibar framework. The final project will involve a paper (20+ pages) centered around a research topic of the student's choosing.

This seminar recognizes the value of learning through teaching, which forces the facilitator of discussion to be more in tune with the issues and material. To this end, assigned readings will be discussed in seminar in the week they are listed, and students will be expected to lead at least one seminar session each, distributing prepared materials to guide that discussion. Discussion will always be co-led with the instructor, with whom the presenter will actually confer before the date of the sueminar. This is to prevent "discussion glaze" from occurring, which often plagues unfocused and ill-prepared student-led discussions which lack the instructor's input.

### GRADING

Midterm paper -- 25%

Attendance/Participation -- 25%

Discussion/Presentation – 10%

Final Project -- 40%