

Summer Session 1 2004 || SUNY - Binghamton || Instructor: Taras A. Sak || Office: LT1505
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Memories of Shadow and Stone: Hiroshima/Nagasaki in Literature and Film

AAAS-280E/COLI-211A (M-F 12-1:40 p.m.; FA 344)

Course Description

We will explore several texts, both cinematic/visual and literary, that deal with the destruction of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and 9th, respectively, 1945. This course is an attempt to investigate what is at stake for a sustained reflection upon both the atomic bombings themselves, as well as the larger issue of (Nuclear) Terror and the individual's relation to the (Nuclear) State. Is there any possibility of negotiating this asymmetrical (non-) relation of Power? If I may re-phrase the question a bit, I would like us to explore what possibility (or possibilities) "Art" or "the Literary" might hold for political thought and action in the "Nuclear Age". We will explore various approaches to this question, by both Japanese and non-Japanese alike, and, hopefully, draw our own conclusions.

We will be concerned with the various attempts at (re)presenting the events (often termed "Apocalyptic"), as well as their aftermaths (possible "post-Apocalyptic" worlds, which constitute a major trope of post-'45 Japanese artwork). We will approach "Hiroshima" and "Nagasaki" (both in a literal sense, as well as in a more symbolic or figurative sense) through testimonies, poetry, prose, painting and film. We will also examine how "Hiroshima" and "Nagasaki" have come to haunt the literary, artistic and cinematic imagination since the world learned of the horrors of nuclear warfare. "Our task throughout", as professor William Haver reminds us, "is to think the limits of the thinkable; to imagine the figure of the unimaginable; to think what we have forgotten in order to render the unbearable tolerable".

One of the objectives of this course is to better prepare you for college-level research and writing, so there will be an emphasis upon developing your skills through your written assignments. Class participation is a key element of both your grade and of ensuring lively discussion—please come to class prepared, with thoughtful comments/questions, and always respect the opinions of others.

Note: Some of the images and texts you will encounter in this course will prove extremely disturbing. It is precisely your duty as a thinking, feeling, (human) being *to be disturbed by them*, and yet, as a scholar, it is incumbent upon you to enter into, rather than retreat from, that encounter. It is my sincere hope that this class will be the site of such an encounter—indeed, a life-changing, life-affirming one. However, if you think such imagery and description will be too much for you, I suggest you look for another class.

Required Texts

- *Hiroshima* (John Hersey)

- *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses* (Richard H. Minear, ed. and trans.)
- *The Crazy Iris and Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath* (Oe Kenzaburo, ed.)
- *Black Rain* (Ibuse Masuji)

NOTE: there will also be a number of essays available on E-Reserve (hereafter ERES)

Optional Texts (choose one for your final project)

- *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Marguerite Duras/Alain Resnais)
- *A Pale View of Hills* (Kazuo Ishiguro)
- *Cat's Cradle* (Kurt Vonnegut)
- *The Nuclear Age* (Tim O'Brien)

Recommended Texts

A Writer's Reference, 5th Ed. (Diana Hacker)

A Pocket Style Manual, 4th Ed. (Diana Hacker)

Required Films (to be viewed in class)

- Footage of Hiroshima, Nagasaki (Iwasaki Akira et al., 1945)
- *On the Beach* (Stanley Kramer, 1959)
- *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951)
- *Gojira/Godzilla* (Honda Inoshiro, 1954/1956)
- *Record of a Living Being/I Live in Fear/What the Birds Knew* (Kurosawa Akira, 1955)
- *Graveyard of the Fireflies* (Takahata Isao, 1994)
- *Dreams* (Kurosawa Akira, 1990)
- *Black Rain* (Imamura Shohei, 1989)
- *Rhapsody in August* (Kurosawa Akira, 1991)
- *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959)
- *Akira* (Otomo Katsuhiro, 1988)

Assignments

This is a discussion course. Students are responsible for completing all of the assigned course work and are expected to regularly attend and actively participate in course

discussions. Students are expected to come to class **prepared**. “Prepared” means that you have done the assigned reading, have thought about it, and have something relevant to say in class. Always bring the assigned reading material (for each particular day) to class. Always try to bring two or three **developed** comments/questions about the assigned reading to class.

Students will be required to make 2 presentations—in pairs or small groups—discussing the assigned readings. One presentation will concern the student’s final project (a novel or play); the other presentation will concern more “theoretical” essays. Details concerning the structure of the presentations will be discussed in class.

Students will be required to write 4 response papers throughout the course, 2 pages in length each. The purpose of the response papers is to help you with your writing, as well as to show me that you have read and thought about the course material. (Note: These papers will be graded based on your **demonstrated mastery of the assigned text.**) **Using your own words**, and in clear language, discuss the essay(s), verse or prose pieces you have read or films we have viewed for that week. Response papers must be **typed, size-12 font, with normal margins and double-spaced**; also, they should express a sense of critical engagement with the text(s). No book reports (simple restatements or summaries of plots), or papers based solely on personal anecdote, will be accepted. All papers are **due at the beginning** of the class on the date they are due. Late response papers will be dropped one letter grade for each day (including non-class days) that they are late.

In addition to the response papers, **students will be required to write a final 10-page research paper** (this is equivalent to a final exam). Separate handouts detailing the requirements and structure, as well as the questions/themes to choose from, for the response papers and the research paper will be given out in class. No late research papers will be accepted (without prior consultation of the instructor). **Plagiarism** in any of the course assignments, in any form, will be dealt with harshly and will result in an automatic **F**.

Re-writes, or revisions, will be required for the last writing assignment. In other words, we will work together to develop your writing, from a one-paragraph project proposal, to a formal outline, then as a “rough draft” (6-8 pages in length) and finally as a 10-page paper to be handed in on the day of our last class meeting. All papers are to follow **MLA documentation style**.

Grading

- Attendance, class participation, and 2 presentations 30%
- Response papers 40% (10% each)
- Final Essay 30%

NOTE: More than 2 unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your grade, one letter grade for each unexcused absence. Also, **excessive tardiness** will **not** be tolerated and can also lower your grade. Come to class regularly and on time. Please **turn off your cellular phone** while in class.

Tentative Schedule

(Instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time during the course)

WEEK 1: Orientation; Early Responses to the bombings

- June 1: Intro./Expectations; footage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 1945; begin *On the Beach*
June 2: Continue *On the Beach*; Dower's "The Bombed" (ERES); Lifton ("Chapter 1") on ERES
June 3: Finish *On the Beach*; begin discussion of Hersey's *Hiroshima* (pp. 1-90)
June 4: MOVIE: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*; finish Hersey's *Hiroshima* (pp. 91-152).

RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE

WEEK 2: Japanese Responses

- June 7: from *the Crazy Iris and Other Stories*: "Introduction" (Oe); "the Crazy Iris" (Ibuse); "the Land of Heart's Desire" (Hara); "Human Ashes" (Oda) and "Fireflies" (Ota).
June 8: MOVIE: *Gojira/Godzilla*
June 9: from *the Crazy Iris and Other Stories*: "The Colorless Paintings" (Sata); "the Empty Can" (Hayashi); "the House of Hands" (Inoue); "the Rite" (Takenishi).
June 10: MOVIE: *Record of a Living Being/I Live in Fear/What the Birds Knew*
June 11: Introduction to *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses* and Hara Tamiki section ("Introduction" and "Summer Flowers", pp. 3-113). **RESPONSE PAPER #2 AND FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL (1 paragraph) DUE**

WEEK 3: Japanese Responses, continued

- June 14: Begin Ota Yoko section of *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses* ("City of Corpses", pp. 117-273)
June 15: MOVIE: *Graveyard of the Fireflies*; view *the Unforgettable Fire* (book)
June 16: Finish Ota Yoko section of *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*
June 17: MOVIE: *Dreams* (selections); **Students choose Essays to present to class.**
June 18: Toge Sankichi section of *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses* ("Poems of the Atomic Bomb", pp. 277-369); also read "The Hiroshima Murals..." pp. 371-378 (and view them in class).
RESPONSE PAPER #3 AND FINAL PAPER OUTLINE (formal) DUE

WEEK 4: the Nuclear State versus the individual: our situation

- June 21: Begin Ibuse's *Black Rain* (novel and movie)
June 22: Continue *Black Rain* (novel and movie)
June 23: Presentations 1 (Novels): *A Pale View of Hills*; *the Nuclear Age*; finish *Black Rain* (novel and movie); discuss Lifton ("Appendix" [on *Black Rain*]) on ERES
June 24: MOVIE: *Rhapsody in August*
June 25: Presentations 2 (Essays): Treat and Treat/Schwenger; Haver; Negri and Negri/Guattari (all on ERES). **RESPONSE PAPER #4 AND FINAL PAPER DRAFT (6-8 pages) DUE**

WEEK 5: the Nuclear Sublime/towards the Unknowable Future: Art's work?

- June 28: Presentations 1 (Novel/Play): *Cat's Cradle*; *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.
June 29: MOVIE: *Hiroshima Mon Amour*
June 30: Presentations 2 (Essays): Sontag; Napier; Freiberg; Derrida (all on ERES).
July 1: Begin *Akira*
July 2: Finish *Akira*; course summary and wrap-up. **FINAL PAPER (10 pages) DUE**