

## The Atomic Bomb and the Nuclear Age

Sociology 480J/History 486K

Mark Selden

ms44@cornell.edu

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

### Books

Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Hiroshima's Shadow. Writings on the Denial of History and the Smithsonian Controversy. Pamphleteer's Press.

Committee on International Security and Arms Control, National Academy of Sciences, The Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy National Academy of Sciences.

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 Books

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

### Films:

Grave of the Fireflies, Godzilla, Fat Man and Little Boy, Black Rain, Them, Barefoot Gen, Atomic Cafe, Testament, Dr. Strangelove.

### About this course

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, the United States and the Soviet Union, and the global context and implications of war, peace, security, and human survival. It considers the impact of the making and using of the atomic bomb on American and Japanese societies, including political, social, historical, technological, literary and artistic resonances, and historical memory. We range from the master narratives of nuclear technology, power politics and arms control to the personal narratives and responses of victims and citizens in the United States, Japan and globally. We consider the relationship

between the atomic bomb and the cold war including nuclear terror and arms control and reduction during and after the era of U.S.-USSR confrontation, the nature and achievements of anti-nuclear and anti-war movements, and the contemporary challenge of proliferation exemplified by the Indian and Pakistani bombs, and the plausibility of the nuclear winter and other doomsday hypotheses.

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 on October 6 following e-mail proposal and office hour discussion of the subject. Term papers are due at my office at noon on December 18. I would like to begin discussing your ideas about research papers beginning from the first weeks of the semester through a combination of office hour conferences and e-mail discussion. You should not hesitate to float one or more preliminary ideas in these discussions, preferably after briefly consulting the list of relevant readings provided in the syllabus. Students with common research interests will be encouraged to collaborate where feasible. We plan to use e-mail communication to plan presentations and papers, to discuss pertinent issues among students and/or with the instructor, and to make student papers available to members of the seminar. If there is interest, we will consider making a web page for archiving the term papers.

There is no prescribed length for the term paper, but twenty pages is a length that may be appropriate for working through a significant problem.

Students are expected to report on assigned readings and films and to participate in class discussion. Unless otherwise noted, films and videos will be available in the reserve library for your viewing prior to class. Please come to class prepared to discuss them.

Grades are based on evaluation of the **quality** of contributions to class discussion, oral presentations, précis, and term paper.

### Syllabus

1. Before the Bomb: Power, and the Clash of Empires in World War II. 9.8
  - a. Dower, War Without Mercy, 1-14, 77-93, 203-33, 293-317. [For pleasure and reflection: the illustrations, 181-200.]
  - a. Michael Sherry, The Rise of American Air Power, 256-92, 69-70.
  - b. Mark Selden, "The Logic of Mass Destruction," in Bird and Lifschultz, Hiroshima's Shadow, 51-62.
  - c. Eric Markusen and David Kopf, The Holocaust and Strategic Bombing. Genocide and Total War in the 20th Century, 55-78, xi-xiv.

#### Supplement:

- a. Christopher Thorne, The Issue of War. States, Societies, and the Far Eastern Conflict of 1941-1945, 13-54.
- b. Yuki Tanaka, Hidden Horrors. Japanese War Crimes in World War II, 1-10, 134-54, 160-65, 197-215.

2. **Film and Discussion:** Grave of the Fireflies (90 minutes). 9.15.

In class screening and discussion on Japanese perspectives on World War II bombing.

**Note:** The instructor will be away at this time. A student will introduce and lead a discussion on the film. The weeks of September 15 and 22 provide ideal opportunities to move ahead in defining a research topic and discussing it with the instructor.

3. Medical and Environmental Aspects of Nuclear Bombs and Power Generation. 9.29

**Guest presentation by Alan Haber**, Binghamton radiation biologist and former research scientist at Oak Ridge Laboratory. 9.29

**This week only the seminar will meet in Science III, Room 214.**

- a. Eric J. Hall, Radiation and Life (2nd. ed., 1984), "Of Cells, Mice and Men," 21-55.
- b. 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.
- c. Masamoto Nasu, Hiroshima. A Tragedy Never to Be Repeated, 16-19 (handout).

**Film:** Godzilla. King of the Monsters (2 hours)

Supplement:

- a. Chon Noriega, "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When *Them!* is U.S.," in Mick Broderick, ed., Hibakusha Cinema. Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film, 54-74.

4. The Atomic Decision: Why? 10.6

- a. Henry Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," Harper's Magazine (February, 1947) in Bird and Lifschultz, Hiroshima's Shadow, 197-210.
- b. Gar Alperovitz, "Historians Reassess: Did We Need to Drop the Bomb?" in Bird and Lifschultz, eds., Hiroshima's Shadow, 5-21.
- c. Paul Fussell, "Thank God for the Atomic Bomb," Hiroshima's Shadow, 211-22.
- d. Robert Lifton and Greg Mitchell, Hiroshima in America, 3-83.

Supplement:

- a. Essays by Sayle, Blackett, Bernstein, Sherwin in Hiroshima's Shadow.

**Film:** Fat Man and Little Boy. Starring Paul Newman. (2 hrs)

**Note: Term paper précis is due in class on October 6.**

5. The Atomic Bomb, Japan's Decision to Surrender and the Dawn of The Nuclear Age. 10.13

- 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:** Testament (90 mins)

6. Human Consequences of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1): Hibakusha Documentary and Visual Accounts 10.20

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. 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.

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

Supplement:

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

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

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

7. Human Consequences of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (2): Japanese and American Literary Representations. 10.27

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:** Them (90 mins).

8. The Bomb, Anti-war and Anti-nuclear Movements. November 3.

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, 39-79.

b. Michael Sherry, "Patriotic Orthodoxy and American Decline," in Hein and Selden, eds., Living With the Bomb, 134-54.

c. 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. Wittner, *One World or None*. Volume 2.

**Film:** Barefoot Gen (90 mins).

9. The Bomb, Arms Control and Nuclear Disarmament. November 10.
  - a. Committee on International Security and Arms Control, National Academy of Sciences, The Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy, 1-98.
  - b. John Gaddis, "Nuclear Weapons and Cold War History," and Dan Smith, "The Uselessness and the Role of Nuclear Weapons: an Exercise in Pseudo-problems and Disconnection," in Jorn Gjelstad and Olav Njolstad, eds., Nuclear Rivalry and International Order, 40-54, 85-101.
10. The Indian and Pakistani Bombs and the Control and Abolition of Nuclear Weapons After the Cold War. November 17.

**Readings to be assigned.**

11. The Bomb in Japanese and American Memory (1) 11.24
  - 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," Asada Sadao, "The Mushroom Cloud and National Psyches: Japanese and American Perceptions of the Atomic Bomb Decision, 1945-1995," in Hein and Selden, Living With the Bomb, 3-72, 173-202.
  - b. Oe Kenzaburo, Hiroshima Notes, 11-71, 123-71 (and as much more as time permits).

Supplement:

- a. John Whittier Treat, "Oe Kenzaburo: Humanism and Hiroshima," in Writing Ground Zero. Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb, 229-58.
- b. 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 (90 mins).

12. The Bomb in Japanese and American Memory (2). 12.1
  - 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, 155-72, 202-59, 100-21.
  - c. Mike Wallace, "The Battle of the Enola Gay," in Bird and Lifschultz, Hiroshima's Shadow, 317-37.

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" to Rinjiro Sodei, Were We the Enemy? American Survivors of Hiroshima.

c. Seiitsu 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:** Dr. Strangelove. Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. (90 mins.)

13. Student Presentations of Papers and final discussion. 12.8

Reserve Book List

(Note: Supplementary readings have not been placed on reserve.)

- Paul Baker, ed., The Atomic Bomb. The Great Decision.
- Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Hiroshima's Shadow. Writings on the Denial of History and the Smithsonian Controversy. Pamphleteer's Press.
- Committee on International Security and Arms Control, National Academy of Sciences, The Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy National Academy of Sciences.
- 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.
- Jorn Gjelstad and Olav Njolstad, eds., Nuclear Rivalry and International Order.
- Hans Graetzer and Larry Browning, The Atomic Bomb. An Annotated Bibliography. 1992
- Eric J. Hall, Radiation and Life (2nd. ed., 1984).
- 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.
- Keiji Nakazawa, Barefoot Gen (two volumes).
- Kenzaburo Oe, Hiroshima Notes.
- Richard Rhodes, The Making of the Atomic Bomb.
- Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, and Bhalchandra Udgaonkar, eds. A Nuclear-Weapon-Free World. Desirable? Feasible?
- Kyoko Selden and Mark Selden, eds., The Atomic Bomb. Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- 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 Whittier Treat, Writing Ground Zero. Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb.
- Lawrence Wittner, One World or None. The Struggle Against the Bomb.

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

1. How many people died/were injured, as a result of the atomic bombings 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/Nagasaki? What scientific and technological issues remain unresolved and why?
3. Why did the Truman administration use the bomb at Hiroshima? Nagasaki? How did it subsequently justify its decision to use the bomb (twice).
4. Was the bomb critical to ending the war? To saving American/Japanese lives? Discuss the issues in the context of the positions of Japan, the USSR, and the US.
5. Assess the dominant positions in the debate over the decision to drop the atomic bombs.
6. Why are the issues surrounding the dropping of the atomic bomb still so intense five decades later? Do the issues appear different when viewed from the US and from Japan?
7. What is to be learned from a review of Japanese and American literatures (or visual and other arts) on the atomic bombing?
8. Assess the impact of anti-nuclear movements (or official arms control efforts) on the development of nuclear weapons and nuclear power during and after the Cold War.
9. Make the case for (or against) the abolition of nuclear weapons (and/or nuclear power).
10. How can and should nuclear weapons be limited, reduced and eliminated? Assess the major proposals currently under debate concerning nuclear arms control and elimination.
11. How has historical memory of the bomb in the United States and Japan differed? Assess the master narratives and critical narratives in both countries and explain the differences.
12. Explain Japan's decision to surrender.
13. What has been the impact of the decision to use the bomb on subsequent international conflict? Did the bomb help preserve peace or exacerbate military conflict since World War II?
14. 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.
15. In what sense can the era from the final years of World War II be called the nuclear age?
16. In what ways, if any, do themes of racism illuminate atomic issues?

17. What is the significance of the fact that the U.S. is the only nation that has used the bomb?

18. Develop a "least worse case" strategy to deal with the problem of nuclear waste.

19. Evaluate some of the leading proposals for reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons.

20. Assess the nuclear winter hypothesis.