The Politics of History/Memory in Modern East Asia

Meeting Day/Time: Tuesdays, 10:35 am – 12:05 pm

Instructor: Erik ESSELSTROM, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of History, Director, Asian Studies Program, The University of Vermont (USA); Visiting Associate Professor, Hitotsubashi University, Graduate School of Law, Faculty of Law

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Course Theme: This course takes as its subject the complex interaction of historical memory and international relations in East Asia today. By exploring the numerous and often quite dramatic differences between how political regimes and ordinary citizens in Japan, China, Korea and the United States understand and represent their historical experience, particularly their memories of Japan’s colonial era and the Second World War in Asia, we will cultivate a sophisticated and multi-dimensional understanding of how historical consciousness both shapes, and is shaped by, political relationships between nation-states in East Asia today.

Course Requirements: The course will follow a seminar-style format. The instructor will occasionally deliver brief lectures to provide background historical information, but student discussion of assigned readings will be our primary activity in class. In order to be adequately prepared for those discussions, each student should write a one-page summary with suggested discussion questions in advance of our class meeting. In addition to weekly group discussions, each student will develop and produce a term paper on a topic of her/his choice in consultation with the instructor and make a brief presentation on that topic to the seminar. More information concerning that assignment will be made available later in the term.

Final course grades will be determined according to the following percentages:

Weekly Participation (40%), Term Paper Prospectus (10%); Presentation (20%), Final Term Paper (30%)

Course Reading Materials: Each week students will read the rough equivalent of one academic journal article and/or book chapter in English. Specific texts are identified within the course schedule and all reading assignments will be made available by the instructor as PDF files. There are no required books for purchase in this course.
April 10  Introduction to the Course
• Discussion – The Construction of History, Myth and Memory

April 17  Pearl Harbor in American Memory

April 24  The Atomic Bombs in American Memory

May 1  NO CLASS MEETING TODAY

May 8  The War with America in Japanese Memory

May 15  Remembering the Japanese Colonial Era in Korea

May 22  Remembering the War with Japan in China

• Term paper prospectus is due today

June 5  The Okinawa Problem
June 12  **Remembering the Showa Emperor**

June 19  **The Yasukuni Problem**
- Mark Selden, "Japan, the United States, and Yasukuni Nationalism" *Economic and Political Weekly* 43:45 (Nov 8-14, 2008): 71-77.

June 26  **Museums and Public Memory**

July 3  **History Textbooks and Public Education**

July 10  *Independent Work* (individual meetings with Prof. Esselstrom as needed)

July 17  **Student Presentations**

July 24  **Student Presentations** (continued)

Summary Discussion  *Term Papers Due Today*

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**Possible Presentation/Term Paper Topics***

J-K-C Territorial Disputes  The Tokyo War Crimes Trials
Historical Controversies  Problems in U.S.-Korea Relations
  in Early J-K-C Relations  Problems in North-South Korea Relations
The Okinawa Base Problem  Specific Topics in Textbook Controversies
Article 9 and Re-armament  Victim Lawsuits and Compensation Claims
History in film and/or television  History in China-U.S. Relations
The 君が代 Problem  Japanese Views on U.S. Wars since 1945
Politicians and History Statements  History in anime and/or manga

*These are only a few suggestions. Each is student is free to develop a topic of her/his choice.*