

HST 203: History of the United States Sp17 (Escobar Meta 41054 41053)

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by Joe Escobar - Saturday, May 13, 2017, 7:27 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Historical Amnesia topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Historical Amnesia

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[Permalink](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Crimes of the Past - Lessons for the Present**

by Andrew Trott - Saturday, May 13, 2017, 2:00 PM

Historical Amnesia is one of the most dangerous principles that any group of people can partake in. As Escobar has stated "history doesn't repeat itself but it does have similarities." One of the only way to avoid these similarities is to acknowledge the atrocities of the past that no one would like to see repeated. Japan is not proud of what it happened in Nanking and would not like to see anything like that happen ever again. Professor David A Cook calls the Rape of Nanking the ghost of Japanese Imperialism. It "represents an international embarrassment for the Japanese." (2:25, History Channel). But if these instances are glossed over, rather than faced, it leaves room for similar events to occur in the future.

One of the videos state that “the Chinese say “the bones of their massacred ancestors will not rest until the world ensures that there will never be another Nanking.” (2:55, History Channel). In recognizing and teaching the past, as it truly happened, it allows for change and progress to occur. To cover events of the past up or pretend as if they never happened only leaves room for similar atrocities to occur in the future. It is the same with America’s past only in opening up about the genocide of the Indigenous people of America and the enslavement and treatment of people of African brought to America can American society begin to heal from the past otherwise the wound will fester, change and possibly become worse. In class Escobar talked about an American Japanese women held in an internment camp during WWII who felt that through the American Government apologizing and openly acknowledging its mistake some sense of honor and justice could be restored to her. The simple act of recognition and validation can have profound effects.

If the crimes of the past can lead to a lesson learned, both nationally and internationally, then these crimes are not in vain. If the horrors of the past are forgotten then they were truly for no reason. It is only by teaching the events of the past, especially the worst of it, that we may honor those who have suffered. This is why when the events at Nanking are not taught “such action had severely hurt the Chinese people's feelings and constituted an insult to the Chinese people,” (Kristina Nwazota, NewsHour Extra). In not teaching the massacre at Nanking there is a second atrocity being committed against the victims of Nanking.

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3

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Re: Crimes of the Past - Lessons for the Present

by Austin Muller - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 7:06 PM

You, among others in the forum thread have argued that historical amnesia allows for the atrocities of the past to be repeated. The transitive opposite to that would be that acknowledging the sins of the past allows the world to learn and prevent them from repeating. I am not out right disagreeing with you, however I would argue the effect that it would in fact have. Looking at how Nazi Germany persecuted the Jews, among other groups, logistically, it was really only achievable by way of the power that their regime had attained. So while I think that Germany’s acceptance and admission of their egregious act is more than admirable, I don’t know if they are actually preventing another one from happening. If a group or country has the vicious enough intent to carry out a similar atrocity, I think it can still happen. It does not need to have the coordination that Nazi Germany had to set up their camps across parts of Europe. An example is the Rwandan Genocide, where an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered in a span of just 7 days, while a total of 2,000,000 were either displaced or became refugees. While this does not hold exact similarities to the Holocaust or the Rape of Nanking, the scale of this massacre and the fact that it was directed at a specific group makes it close enough. While no one disputes what happened during this particular genocide, so historical amnesia does not apply here, my point is that it still happened. If the Japanese had admitted their wrong doing for the Rape of Nanking before the Rwandan Genocide, would it have been prevented? While you may not be saying that these events are preventable in the first place, you do say in your post, “But if these instances are glossed over, rather than faced, it leaves room for similar events to occur in the future.” I guess my entire point is that the “room” will be there regardless I think, for things like this to occur.

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Re: Crimes of the Past - Lessons for the Present

by Andrew Trott - Friday, May 19, 2017, 8:53 PM

I do agree with you that "If a group or country has the vicious enough intent to carry out a similar atrocity, ... it can still happen." But I would also insert that the more a country is educated on the crimes of their past the less likely they will be to allow these crimes to come to fruition once again. The main reason that Nazi Germany was able to gain power was because of the massive support Hitler gained from his populist movement. This support seems to be from people who were easily influenced and largely lied to. The more education that takes place the less a group of individuals will be able to be manipulated.

I am not suggesting that if Japan were to be educated on what happened in Nanking that the Genocide in Rwanda would not have occurred but I am suggesting that education in Japan leads to just that, a more educated Japan. And the more than those in Japan are educated the more that the people there will be able to understand their complex history and act accordingly. Perhaps as the world becomes more globalized then we will be able to learn more fully from the mistakes of our fellow humans. Currently however though I think that a lesson for one nation will simply be a lesson for one nation. It would be naive for me to believe that the education of an Asian country will a growing western culture would influence the political history of an African nation directly.

As education of past atrocities becomes more common there will still be future atrocities surely. But by acknowledging and owning up to the crimes of the past we may honor those who were harmed, directly or indirectly, from the atrocity.

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Re: Crimes of the Past, in regards to honor

by Katie Fuller - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 12:50 PM

The Japanese people, as a culture, hold honor to be important, as they have proven through resisting surrender after the first bombings, and having a split in opinion in counsel even after the second as shown in the video in class on Tuesday. I think that part of Japan's reasoning for keeping this event hidden from their people to uphold honor, as an article admits this as an "embarrassment" in Japanese history. To this, I agree that the history should be admitted so that similar events do not occur, as mentioned, so other nation's people can regain some honor from their mistreatment, as the Japanese woman did after the internment of Japanese Americans was apologized for.

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Understanding Why

by Edward Billings - Saturday, May 13, 2017, 8:27 PM

The "Rape of Nan King" and the other war crimes committed by the Japanese in WWII are the result of extreme nationalism by a warrior civilization. This is not isolated to the Japanese, or WWII for that matter, but the circumstances involving the Japanese Culture, in particular, are among the most disturbing because of their cultural heritage. Being of a warrior culture that

developed in isolation for much of their existence there is a certain disconnect, or set of beliefs and principles. As their understanding of “war” stems from a much more primal mind set, so as they moved into expanding their empire through Manchuria and into China they were following what they thought was their divine work to complete for the Emperor on a world acquisition mission. (History channel documentary Moodle) Being indoctrinated from a young age that the Emperor was a God. (Rape of Nan King part one YouTube) Even though it hasn’t been that long ago we must keep in mind the leaps and bounds that our species has made in the years since these activities were a reality. Keeping that in mind as perspective from the forty to sixty years before these events most people were still only using horse’s to get around and the contact between most civilizations was “alien” at best if at all for most people. History has a way of only telling things from one perspective; Usually from the point of view that lived to tell at that point in time, but for the most part the victor writes the history. I believe it is here where the part of the human psyche that involves rationalizing tends to take over and “historical amnesia” becomes a sort of coping mechanism. Just as our own country has written its history leaving out some, or most of our own transgression to other human beings only to emphasize the ends and not so much the means. Tamaki Tumotta investigated the massacre finding contradictory assertions about these aggressions.(Moodle video) This sort of thing, especially in this day and age has a way of coming to the forefront as information flows at light speed these days. The photographic and oral record of this atrocity are only visited in retrospect as our societies learn more about ourselves and each other. I think that the most concerning thing about many of these scenarios is that without an open mind we as human beings are able to repeat them without understanding the situation in it's entirety.

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Re: In regards to schools and nationalism

by Katie Fuller - Friday, May 19, 2017, 2:21 PM

I agree that without the full story of the past, a nation is more likely to repeat itself. The students that read these edited textbooks, especially suffer, as they don't see the event for what the Nanking Massacre was really like, that brings about a false sense of national superiority when viewing the crimes of other nations. That is another reason why this history is so important to know.

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1



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Re: The dangers of historical amnesia

by Brandon Gericke - Monday, May 15, 2017, 2:11 PM

As I read and watched the videos on the Nanking Massacre, I was appalled and surprised at this piece of history that i had never heard of before. Which made me think of a few things. Germany has confronted the atrocities committed by their people during WWII and have made the Nazi solute and the denying of the Holocaust illegal, among many other things. If Germany has been held accountable for its actions during WWII, why haven't the Japanese been held accountable for their atrocities against the Chinese. I mean sure they paid the price for attacking the United States at Pearl Harbor, but nothing is being said or done about Nanking. This also started me along another line of thought. If a country can deny, cover-up or hide its atrocities, then what would prevent that country from doing something similar later on? If the world is kept in the dark about a country or groups misdeeds, how can we hold them

accountable and attempt to prevent anything similar from ever occurring? From what one documentary was saying, this is just a classic example of how the Japanese waged a "War of Aggression", This would lead me to believe that this has happened more often than we think or know.

I think this concept of historical amnesia can apply to the United States history of dealing with Native Americans, the Irish, the Japanese internment camps, and the barring of Chinese immigration to America. These are just a few examples of where the facts are "white-washed" to shed a better light on them. I feel that this is dangerous to do because it allows a country to think they have done no wrong and that their actions are always justified. Which can lead to blind nationalism and we have all seen where that gets us.

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Re: Historical Amnesia - Rape of Nanking

by Morgan Brown - Monday, May 15, 2017, 2:52 PM

After seeing all that footage of the atrocities committed by the Japanese in Nanking, it's impossible for me to defend the Japanese textbooks underplaying it as simply an "incident" and censoring the sheer violence of their actions. Ignoring or denying something as horrific as this is inhumane and totally unreasonable, based on the information I've seen in the sources. The cruelty cannot be understated. However, I can understand not wanting to carry around the weight of these horrible actions; the U.S. does much of the same when it comes to it's own history, so it's no real shock. Both are despicable to me. History cannot be rewritten.

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Re: Historical Amnesia - Rape of Nanking

by Andrew Trott - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 1:12 PM

I'm thinking you mean that you cannot help but disagree and combat the Japanese textbooks for referring to the Rape of Nanking, as merely and "incident." That would help me understand your post better, if that is what you mean. I am also curious by what you mean when you say "History cannot be rewritten;" In what way cannot it not be rewritten?

I also completely agree that America does much of the same when we gloss over how horrible slavery really was, what our internment camps were really like, or the treatment of Native American's as the country expanded west. There is much of America's history that is glossed over or simply not covered. It would serve both parties if the US were to fully admit the depth of our transgressions against others on our rise to power. Truly with what we have done "The cruelty cannot be understated."

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Historical Amnesia's fallout

by Austin Muller - Monday, May 15, 2017, 6:35 PM

The way the Japanese have handled the majority of the historical records of the Rape of Nanking show that the country holds a great deal of shame for what occurred. As would any country bearing a stain like that on their nation's history. Even China, who was the victim in this atrocity, is guilty of historical amnesia to a certain extent, "China-- a country infamous for smoothing over its often harsh human rights policies—..." (Article #2) It is obvious to see why a country would want to forget that it had ever participated in an massacre such as this. In doing so however, they are shying away from the positives that can be reached from educating people on what occurred. Japan can begin to mend their relationship with the Chinese people who still feel, and rightfully so, outraged and utterly disrespected by what occurred 60 years ago, and Japan's general denial of the massacre to this day. Full acknowledgment by the Japanese would shine a negative light in the short term to the their people, however it could also potentially help them tremendously. It has been insinuated by the Chinese that they will continue to use their position in the U.N. Security Council to prevent Japan from joining, stemming from the results of the Rape of Nanking, "On Tuesday the Chinese premier hinted that China may use its veto power to prevent Japan from joining the council." (Article #2) This is an example of how the fallout of historical amnesia can lead to long lasting effects on multiple nations and their people's. Both China and Japan would be beneficiaries if this historical amnesia was done away with.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: Historical Amnesia's fallout

by Edward Billings - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 8:41 PM

I think that you are on the right train of thought the only thing that this is lacking is the human element. You did touch base on the political aspects, but I think that as humans we are susceptible to act on our feelings, or instilled reflex rather than what's healthy, or best for all parties involved. It just seems that even when one side of any of these circumstances acknowledges their wrong the other side of the situation finds something wrong with the semantics of how it was addressed. I am not saying this is always the case, but it seems to have been a repeated event without objective mediators. The fact of the matter is rational clear thinking people don't participate in these sort of affairs.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Historical Amnesia's fallout

by Austin Muller - Thursday, May 18, 2017, 12:28 AM

I agree with you that more than likely the Chinese would take issue with how Japan acknowledges the Rape of Nanking, if they ever decide to do so. But who is to say a total all encompassing acknowledgment and apology of the issue wouldn't trigger both countries to start moving forward? As it stands right now though, yes, China certainly takes issue with how Japan handles the history behind the massacre. You mention, "It just seems that even when one side of any of these circumstances acknowledges their wrong the other side of the situation finds something wrong with the semantics of how it

was addressed.” Out of curiosity do you have a particular historical instance you are referring to? Or do you just mean any instance where two parties are at odds about taking ownership of a mistake?

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The Denial of NanKing

by Andrew Erkert - Monday, May 15, 2017, 10:27 PM

My gravest concern with the incidences of historical amnesia presented in the video and in the articles, is the fact that there is still denial of the events that took place in Nanking. I understand their reasoning on why they want to forget it, it was a truly horrendous act and no nation wants to admit to committing that. Nonetheless, it has been 60 years and they still only refer to it as an “incident” in textbooks. Countries need to own up to their past to relieve it. There are still people in china who have traumatic memories and lost loved ones, and they will never get closer. Not to mention the state of the Japanese soldiers, they were turned into mindless, unempathetic, unsentimental killers. Having them own up to their deeds and having the emperor own up to his, the country can start to mend and become healthy. Like when people have traumatic experiences, their therapist will try to help them understand it, and learn from it, they don't tell them just to forget about it and hope it goes away.

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Gravest Concerns and Historical Amnesia

by Angela Yackley - Monday, May 15, 2017, 11:39 PM

When I think about the tailoring of history texts and holocaust deniers I hear the time old saying ring in my head, "For those who do not know their history, are doomed to repeat it." But in this course, some other concepts have caused me to challenge this old adage. After all, people are no different than they have always been but "the arrogance of the present" (Ken Burns, Lecture Notes) continues to echo back at us throughout our culture that, somehow, things are different these days. That we are somehow better than our predecessors and yet have it worse than they did is the kind of thinking that draws on my concerns- it justifies a relaxed perspective in reviewing the past. Why look back at all when things are *so hard* now? We can count on humans to continue to make similar blunders and atrocities as they have in the past but then knowing of these, try and strive to route away from familiar seeming turns if given the chance to understand the road behind them. What we don't need are people denying that terrible things happened or a historical eraser to ease a cultures conscious (Article #2, paragraph 9) to aid in a nationalistic agenda. History may not be cyclical, but the recurring theme of nationalism has paved the way towards violent expansionism and the deaths of millions time and time again.

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Re: Gravest Concerns and Historical Amnesia

by Brandon Gericke - Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 12:06 PM

I think you said it best when you stated that the recurring theme of nationalism paved the way for the deaths of millions and violent expansionism. If a peoples conscious holds no guilt or no desire to improve, then how do you prevent the cycle of war, terrorism, racism, and other horrendous acts? I know that if I was allowed to cover-up or brush aside my misdeeds, I would not learn or change for the better. I would do the same if not worse, because i had no reason not to.

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Re: Gravest Concerns and Historical Amnesia

by Andrew Trott - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 1:23 PM

I think you hit the nail on the head, and add an outstanding point to this conversation - the "arrogance of the presence" allows for historical amnesia to occur because "it justifies a relaxed perspective in reviewing the past." To view historical amnesia through this lens allows for me to better understand the motives behind decent communities being able to forget, deny, or dismiss the past as they look towards the future.

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Does history repeat itself?

by Eden Stellavato - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 11:44 AM

To me, the gravest concern(s) with historical amnesia is the danger of history repeating itself. At a certain point if a country or a race forgets the atrocities that have happened throughout history, can and will lead to the repetition of horrors like those of Nanking. Not everyone forgets though, and when the Japanese education system has the power to literally remove a piece of history from textbooks and class discussion to the rest of the world it looks a specific way. Maybe not in the near future but down the road Japanese people growing up with a lack of knowledge regarding these events could be more likely to fall into a fascist regime. But hey if they offered me free garlic fries I would join, but just to get my garlic fries and find a way out... even if it means death. About 00:45 in the Tamaki Matsuoka interview she said that she wants to "Collect more information and tell Japanese children the truth." This is the same as saying "we don't want them to grow up with a lack of knowledge with the known fear of history repeating itself." I could also make a point of an overall understanding of the world from all the people in all countries. Meaning that we should be taught growing up the entire world history not just our own to secure the hope of global progress. Mainly because I didn't know about Nanjing until I started this Forum, or the rape, senseless killing and everything else that went on. Neither did I know in Article 2 specifically "China's spotted past" that between 1958 and 1961 communism led to the death of 30 million Chinese people. There's many other connections I could make but I'd like to use the most hated presidents list from class. Somehow the American people forgot Truman dropped nukes on Japan but remembered the very recent events that took place with Obama and Bush. If the American people forget something like that, don't you think we'd be doomed to repeat it?

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Re: The problem with Historical Amnesia



by Katie Fuller - Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 8:22 PM

The problem with the idea of historical amnesia was that these nations were trying to hide a terrible act done in the past by keeping the public oblivious. With Japan, the Nanking Massacre, also known as the Rape of Nanking, was banned from textbooks four decades later (Rape of Nanking overview). Also, as mentioned in the article regarding Japanese textbooks, they are described as downplaying or glazing over the event, referring to the Nanking Massacre as an “incident”.. Also underplay the use of sex slaves, women brought from all over Asia to service the Japanese military” (China Says Japanese Textbooks Distort History). However, as mentioned further on in this article, despite the Chinese retelling their own history by leaving out the Tiananmen Square Democracy where thousands of people were killed at an unarmed protest or the three year famine under communist policies that led to the death of about 30 million. This editing or downplaying of history brings out a sense of concern towards offending other countries, as Chinese people protested and strongly disagreed to these textbooks’ approval “with demonstrations throwing stones at Japanese embassy and breaking windows at some Japanese restaurants”. Understating these events also denies the country their responsibility they have towards their own nation’s mistakes, and without these events being known, the government cannot learn from them.

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Respect for History

by William Mc Mahon - Saturday, May 20, 2017, 3:43 PM

As far as concerns about "historical amnesia" and WWII, one of my concerns is that U.S. citizens don't always have as much respect for the use of atomic bombs as is appropriate. I feel as though the general mindset around the use of the bombs is, "well, we had to do that." I don't think we need to consider any sort of a what-would-have-happened scenario to have a deeper reverence for the destruction the bombs caused. Personally, it's hard for me to comprehend that those were two cities that were bombed. Cities full of civilians. When considering that I think about what it would be like if, say, North Korea was able to get a bomb across the Pacific and it landed in Eugene. When I think about that I get this feeling of dread and horror. I think it's important for people to try and truly appreciate the gravity of some historical occurrences, regardless of whether or not you think something is right or justified.

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