

HST 203: U.S. History Sp19 (Escobar)

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Historical Amnesia
by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, May 10, 2019, 11:24 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Historical Amnesia topic.

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Historical Amnesia Q1
by [Gregory Graff](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 10:18 AM

Trying to cover up or completely destroy atrocities committed by civilians on orders from the divine Emperor or the people in top officials in government will exceedingly diminish further investigation of what power and imperialism truly looks like. It gives the impression that the lives lost are of no importance and that the conscience of the ones who committed the evil acts are of their own doing. Also, leaving the decision makers as glorified heroes when in fact they are war criminals. Some in Japan according to the video still look at the Emperor as a great conquer, the same way some here in the US glorify Kissinger or Cheney.

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Historical Amnesia Q2
by [Gregory Graff](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 10:24 AM

Codes of war should be similar to the Geneva Conventions, written and enforced by the United Nations. With the elimination of all veto powers from Russia, Britain, France, China, and the United States. The US should also turn over all of its foreign military bases to the United Nations and dramatically cut defense spending.

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Historical Amnesia Q3
by [Gregory Graff](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 10:33 AM

The Nanking massacre probably wasn't given in more detail because this is a US history book written about The History of the American People. Yes, I think we should have been given more detail of this massacre, mainly because of the sheer magnitude of it, resulting in 250,000 to 300,000 deaths from 1937-1938 (article 2) and a total

of 15 million from 1931-1945 (video 3). These lessons teach students what power and imperialism genuinely look like and that they both need to be tamed.

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Re: Historical Amnesia
by [Benjamin Kootnekoff](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 8:55 PM

How is a "code of war" fair given the advantages and disadvantages of certain countries. Should only the powerful countries with history of war be in charge. Or the smaller less war experienced countries be the ones making the calls in time of "war"?

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Japanese War Crimes and Politics
by [Zachary Oswald](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 11:40 PM

"Learn from history or be doomed to repeat it" is a platitude but there is a grain of truth in that statement. The small grain is that it's possible to recognize movements and ideologies that have led to horrors in the past. Learning ideologies that have taken hold in the past, the circumstances and context behind their rise, and the results of putting those ideologies into practice allow people to recognize the possibilities of letting those ideologies arise again. The reason that Japanese imperialists and militarists don't want people to learn about Nanking or that Nazis deny the holocaust isn't because those groups disagree with carrying out atrocities, it's because they understand that war crimes are bad PR.

If the Rape of Nanking and other Japanese war crimes are taught in every Japanese school, as well as the ideology behind the war crimes, then Japanese citizens will be more able to recognize the end results of Japanese nationalism and shy away from them. If Japanese students don't learn about Japanese war crimes, they will likely be more sympathetic to Japanese Nationalism. Nationalists still hold some level of political power in Japan and they are threatened by students learning about Japanese war crimes or any history which paints Imperial Japan in a negative light.

Likely, our textbook didn't go into detail on the Rape of Nanking because the textbook is focused on U.S. history. However, this leaves out the context for the stories that motivated the American public during the war. Our textbook focuses instead on geopolitical causes for WWII, which avoids any hint of bias against the Japanese. While it may be more historically accurate that the U.S. was attacked by Japan primarily over resources and their attempts to create an East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, there are still ideological elements to WWII and victory over Imperial Japan. Learning about how militarism and imperialism led to atrocities in China would certainly be useful for us as citizens.

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Re: Japanese War Crimes and Politics
by [Brayden Lane](#) - Thursday, May 16, 2019, 11:02 PM

The thought of "learn from history or be doomed to repeat it" is a phrase that I believe is used to literally. All times are different but just cause situations are similar they will never be the same as the past. That's why I can agree with the thought of learning ideologies from the past that have taken place. However you won't be able to take the entire details of it and apply to a new situation because every situation will be different. I also agree that they clearly want to cover it up to bury the atrocities of their past but I think it's something you need to teach generations to come. I feel as if all countries and states should teach the youth of the past in order for them to understand what's clearly right and wrong.

Yes the country of Japan is still held by strong nationalist and the teaching of the Rape of Nanking will no doubt make their citizens feel less nationalism. However in today's times nothing from history can be kept a secret and it's not hard to find the truth. For both our book and Japan they need to teach and write about Nanking not only because it's the truth but because it's important for a country's citizens to learn about its past whether they're proud or not. Yes the Raping of Nanking and U.S slavery are different but it's very important as a U.S citizen we know are past to understand what our country went through and understand why it's morally wrong. Imagine if you didn't know the truths of our country's past and we

didn't learn about slavery or manifest destiny because it would look bad upon our country. Its different times and people have to understand that the past still happened and there's nothing you can do to control and hide the truth.

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The unusual Brutality and Horrific actions of the Imperial Japanese Army on December 13, 1937. Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Jason Fitzsimmons](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 11:47 PM

Revisionists and ultra-nationalists seem to have a vested interest in covering up or altogether denying the atrocities that occurred at the “Nanjing Massacre”, more typically referred to as the rape of Nanking. In war, a nations propaganda machine must dehumanize the enemy in order for its soldiers to kill without regard to humanity. No taking of another human life is “humane”, it is final, it is ending all that the person will ever be, it is a final act, it is ending life. War is brutal and brings out the very best(acts of courage and mercy) and absolute wort cruelty in people. A nations “moral” structure is a tapestry of national pride, religious beliefs (or the state as God), and the code of law. Some nations deem acts of “unnecessary” brutality and torture as “war crimes”, or crimes against humanity and forbid taboo acts, such as rape, torture, genocide, murdering civilians, children as barbaric. What transpired as the Japanese entered Nanking on December 13, 1937, is that Imperial Japanese soldiers committed mass murder and rape of Chinese civilians, with estimates ranging from 40,0000 to 300,000 (Wiki, Nanjing Massacre) What concerns me the most is that this heinous act was and is covered up by certain Japanese interests. There are Japanese nationalists who have claimed that the whole massacre was fabricated for propaganda ends. There is no denying that a large-scale massacre and rape of unarmed of Chinese civilians took place. What is troubling is that factions within Japan claim that the massacre was military and nature and not war crimes. Ultra-national revisionists in Japan have tried to erase the “Rape of Nanking” and it is barely mentioned in Japanese history books. After watching and reading the materials provides, I found a very interesting video



, an interview with Iris Chang, about her book “The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World war II in which she researched in detail the events when the Imperial Japanese Army swept into Nanking which was the capital of China at the time. The first-person accounts and pictures of the carnage are unnerving. History should be reported in an unflinching manner for the world the see.

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Re: The unusual Brutality and Horrific actions of the Imperial Japanese Army on December 13, 1937. Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Jason Fitzsimmons](#) - Tuesday, May 14, 2019, 12:02 AM

I was saddened to learn that Author Iris Chang committed suicide at age 36 November 9. 2004. Iris confronted the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and demanded an apology, at the time the Japanese never officially apologized.



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Learn from you mistakes

by [Trenton Hough](#) - Tuesday, May 14, 2019, 6:01 PM

If you're in school or hanging with your family everyone has heard "you learn from your mistakes." At least once in your lifetime. Yes, making mistakes are bad and cost you up front, but down the road you can learn from them. I think this also applies to the Rape of Nanking and other war crimes like it. I believe Tamaki Matsuoka, a Japanese teacher, is doing the right thing by digging up the truth about The Rape of Nanking. The events that happened in the Chinese city of Nanking are unbearably awful, but there is no way to erase what happened. Taking the topic out of the classroom is the wrong think to do. Young students all over the world need to learn what happened. I know its hard to get the truth out of some of the people that were apart of the awful events because they were so scaring to the people involved. We need to take what we have from the people that will talk and what we can get from old writing and teach the world about the events. When people say the soldiers and the people involves have amnesia, I believe it 100%. These events are so cruel and inhumane that the mind must forget about them so that that person can live a semi normal life.

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Textbook short on details

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 8:15 PM

After reading the materials provided by this forum on Nanking, I am shocked that I have never heard of this massacre before as it was obviously very destructive and well known within Asian countries. When examining our textbook, the only thing I found pertaining to this event was that Japanese occupation of Nanjing was "brutal" and "perhaps 300,000 Chinese civilians were killed" (Textbook, p. 705). Our textbook is leaving out that the brutality that occurred was torture, rape, infanticide, and of course murder. I have a couple of hypotheses as to why our textbooks didn't include more details on this period of time. One reason may be that the authors felt that it wasn't as important to add to the narrative as other subjects may have been, and that summing it up to one or two sentences would suffice, as most readers reading that chapter are more focused on other subjects that happened during WWII. Maybe in an older edition there was more added to this story, but over the years they wanted to make this section more concise and focused. Another one of my hypotheses is that perhaps they were worried about backlash they may have received from ultra-nationalist Japanese persons. One of the articles writes that the Chukiren museum that documents evidence of the brutality has faced "Ultrationalists, (who) have threatened to burn down the museum, prompting the elderly staff members to look into the unfamiliar world of high-tech

security" (Article 1). By including more details in the book, perhaps they could have felt in danger or threatened by these types of people if these nationalists somehow chose to read this American textbook. While this is possible, the hypothesis I'm leaning more towards is that they just didn't consider writing paragraphs on the countless terrible events as important as other information they needed to include. I believe more details should have been added, including the gory and hard to read ones, because withholding these details adds to historical amnesia, and leaves people in ignorance. Knowing the gruesome details, perhaps seeing a few photographs, can further the knowledge of the students and readers analyzing this textbook. While I'm sure there are countless other horrific details that this book has left out, I feel that this occupation and its details are important for this generation to learn about, as it can help us understand history better.

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Re: Textbook short on details
by [Zachary Oswald](#) - Thursday, May 16, 2019, 12:08 AM

My theory is that the textbook authors hoped to avoid any impression of bias against the Japanese. Moralizing when discussing a war can seem unprofessional and biased against one side or the other, especially when America is involved. Older history books have a tendency to oversimplify American conflicts in ways that are unfair to the opposing side, this may be an example of the textbook authors being too cautious in avoiding bias. Instead, the textbook seems to focus on economic and political causes for WWII.

I agree that more details should have been added. The Nanking Massacre and the Bataan Death March were important motivators and sources of propaganda during the war (tuesday lecture). This is a needed context to understand what motivated Americans during WWII and why the U.S. military dreaded an invasion of Japan's home islands. Every atrocity in war doesn't need to be included in a short overview, but atrocities like the Nanking Massacre that affected American views of the war should.

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Re: Historical Amnesia
by [Brayden Lane](#) - Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 11:16 PM

To start with its crazy to me that a country believes that they can just wipe history from books and act as if nothing of the likes of Nanking ever happened. Slavery is no doubt one of the worst times in our countries history yet in almost every history class you take you learn about slavery and all the mistakes and mishaps we had. Yes the situation between us and Japan is different and the situations aren't exactly the same but the we learn about our country at its worst instead of ignoring the past. It also also believed that books and Japanese museums distort the truth "Some other Japanese museums discuss the Nanjing massacre and other war crimes, but typically in a way that minimizes or whitewashes the brutalities committed. The most famous example is the museum attached to Yasukuni Shrine, in Tokyo, which is dedicated to the spirits of soldiers who died". (Article #1 War Museum Resists Japan's Historical Amnesia). To me what's worse than not telling the trust is the distortion to it in which they tried to convince people the incidents were minimal and not what they were first believed to be. Personally I believe in countries they need to teach the students of their past and show them what they were at their worst in order to understand how truly bad they were in order to get rid of historical amnesia.

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Re: Historical Amnesia
by [Anthony Nguyen](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 9:11 PM

I agree with you, though our past in this country isn't perfect, we still acknowledge what happened and are taught about it in our classrooms. If we were to ignore the oppression of people of color it would be disrespectful and plain wrong to ignore what happened. I like how you talk about countries teaching about the times when they're at their worst in order to get rid of historical amnesia. Every country has done things that they're not proud of today but whats important is learning from it, not simply pretending it never happened.

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Historical Amnesia



by [David Pineda](#) - Thursday, May 16, 2019, 11:34 AM

After watching these videos and reading these articles I think the gravest issue of historical amnesia is a morality based issue. The people that died as a result of this atrocity are being denied closure because they are being told they are liars. So this denial only prolongs the suffering of those that were affected by the rape of nanking. Because of how the textbook only lightly talks about Nanjing, I think it downplays the real atrocities that were committed and holds back to explain the depth of how awful it truly was. But in the end, the textbook is about American history and involvement in the war and only provides enough background information to set up the role the United States plays in this part of history. While I do think the rape of Nanjing deserved more recognition in this textbook I do understand why it was left out. It is more grouped with world history and Chinese and Japanese history than United States history.

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Discussing the terms of war

by [David Pineda](#) - Thursday, May 16, 2019, 12:25 PM

Codes of war should be discussed by many nations and agreed upon, ideally this is the way it should always be discussed but in reality just because you have a piece of paper signed it doesn't really mean much. Just like how we talked in class about Chamberlains "success" in avoiding a war because he received a signed piece of paper from Hitler. Just like with the Geneva conference, the rules of war were broken by both sides. so if both sides break the rules who is going to enforce it? In reality the only way to enforce the rules to each country is whether each government respectively decides to follow them or not. It would be difficult for another country to force a different country to do something unless done so by war. Economic sanctions could be placed to force the target governments hand but it will not always work. The terms of war will only be truly enforced by those in power if they have good hearts and decide to follow there rules, but in reality there is no authority that will ever force a country to follow rules unconditionally.

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multiple alarming events

by [Jack Swisher](#) - Thursday, May 16, 2019, 7:20 PM

Gravest, "giving cause for alarm; serious." After watching, and reading about these events I think there are lot of serious things that went down between the Japanese and the Chinese people. I think the first alarming scenario is going to be that the rape of nanking video being referred to as the "forgotten holocaust." I don't think anyone wants anything wants to be referred to that. The next alarming thing is the 300,000 chinese that were killed in only a short, six week period. That is crazy. Part of those 300,000 were the 50,000 that were gunned down by machine guns operated by Japanese soldiers. The gravest, and most stunning statistic is that there were 80,000 Chinese women that were raped by Japanese soldiers. Their ages ranged from 7 to 70. Another alarming thing that stood out to me was the Japanese soldiers, and their bayonets. The Japanese soldiers would use Chinese prisoners to practice their bayonet stabbing skills. They wouldn't practice on dummies or anything else to train, but they would actually kill these prisoners.

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Re: multiple alarming events

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 8:05 PM

When evaluating the gravest and most heinous details of the Rape of Nanjing, I would have to agree with your opinion that the gravest and most stunning aspect of these events was the rape of Chinese women and girls. According to the Wikipedia page on the massacre, it is estimated by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East that "20,000 women, including some children and the elderly, were raped during the occupation" (Nanjing Massacre Wiki). I believe this estimated number is probably higher than 20,000, and that we will never know for sure how many women were assaulted and brutalized. In the film interviewing the elderly former Japanese soldiers, one man admits that he would go out and rape women "every day" (Rape of Nanking, 10:30 minute mark). His seeming lack of remorse and the way he answers questions so matter of factly strikes a chord in me. Since I've never been a soldier or in war, it is hard for me to imagine being able to dehumanize other human beings like that.

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This should be in textbooks

by [Jack Swisher](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 7:24 PM

If you google codes of war, and you look at the Wikipedia page for this term, you will find a piece of information that goes like this, "People and property that do not contribute to the war effort should be protected against unnecessary destruction and hardship." This has everything to do with what Japanese soldiers did to the citizens of China. Obviously the Japanese soldiers are not the only ones who have done terrible things to people that are not involved with the war, Hitler and the quest to exterminate jewish people is another example. How this should be enforced is a tough question I think. I feel that you can only do so much to stop events like this, and I think it depends on what a country is trying to accomplish. For example, Germany invading Poland, and then the lightning war. "Over running Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands." (Page 856) This is similar to Japan trying to take China. What I am trying to say, is that we have seen these crazy numbers of deaths against people not involved with the war, when countries are trying to take land. I think there should be heavy, heavy punishments to the soldiers that raped 80,000 Chinese women, and killed 300,000 people. Why this is not in our textbook more is super alarming, this should be something studied so this event, or something similar never happens again. The quotes that say that this event is not in Japanese textbooks is very true. A good friend of mine is from Japan, and when I asked him about this event, he had no clue that it ever happened.

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Re: This should be in textbooks

by [Zachary Oswald](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 10:12 PM

I like the distinction between those involved in the war and regular people, that's a fundamental concept for most ideas of fair or humane warfare. The distinction is between going to war against a country or government and going to war against a people. Hitler, for example, believed that he was at war with the Jewish people, not any Jewish government or group. By this logic, it makes sense to massacre Jews. If the Japanese viewed themselves as at war with China or Chinese people, instead of a specific government, then massacres are just a normal part of war. This isn't excusing those actions in any way. However, there's a connection from the concept of Total War, where there's no distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and genocide. I suspect that part of why the Rape of Nanking isn't in Japanese history books is that its inclusion would require more discussion of how the Japanese conducted the Chinese war and occupation.

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Daniel Zavala](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 1:38 AM

My gravest concern regarding this particular part of history is that it may one day be forgotten. Although the risk of this is fairly low as it is fairly common knowledge throughout the world (especially considering the fact that this is a controversial topic which will make it much more likely to be remembered). The Chinese people (and government) are also unlikely to forget the event as well.

Considering the second topic, while codes of war are in theory a good idea, they tend to have considerable flaws. Ideally, the codes of war would be created and enforced by an organization like the United Nations, but more often than not, these laws are violated and the perpetrators face few substantial punishments. In truth, codes of law only really matter as long as the winning side is willing to abide by them.

There are a few reasons for there being a lack of detail as to what happened at Nanking. The first, less likely reason is that the textbook authors wished to avoid controversy and simply chose to avoid it altogether by glossing over the topic as much as they reasonably could. This is somewhat unlikely considering the book covers other controversial events that are just as brutal with much more detail. The more likely reason is that they chose to only briefly mention it is because as significant as the rape of Nanking is to world history, it is somewhat less important to American history which is, after all the point of the book.

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Telling the Truth

by [Anthony Nguyen](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 4:04 PM

The greatest concern to me regarding historical amnesia about the Rape of Nanking is that the people who were oppressed should not just be forgotten about and erased from history. The Japanese people leaving out certain details in their children's textbook is extremely disrespectful to the people of China that had relatives and loved ones go through this traumatic experience. It appears that Japan is brushing this horrible event off and pretending it never happened. Even in the Tamaki Matsuoka video we watched, the lady at the end interrupted the interview, stating that "he doesn't remember" even though the man clearly was cognizant and able to recall many details throughout the interview. (Video 3) In this example the lady was contributing to the erasure of the Rape of Nanking; it is obvious that she did not want him to talk about what had happened.

While I understand that the Rape of Nanking is probably something Japan wishes to forget, it is a part of their history and shouldn't be treated as if it never happened. I can only imagine the outrage in their country if the authors of our history textbook were to try and hide the facts about the Japanese internment camps during World War II. We also don't try to exclude the details about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from our history. In fact President Obama was the first to apologize for the bombings on behalf of the United States. I'm curious to know if Japan has extended an apology to China for the Rape of Nanking.

I believe the detail lacking from our textbook is probably because it was an event that the United States wasn't involved in, and our textbook is primarily focused on U.S. history. I'm sure that in other textbooks written about World History the Rape of Nanking would be discussed in more detail.

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Stop rewriting history.

by [David Galbreath](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 10:24 PM

after reading these articles and watching the footage I can't see why anyone would want these stories glossed over in history books. knowing something but keeping it a secret for personal gain is lying, in my book. The only real reason a country would need to hide war stories is to save face. The Japanese military committed a tremendous crime, that doesn't mean it should be forgotten. War is already brutal, to say the least, act, but that doesn't mean it's not happening. We should remember what was so we can take a more calculated step in going forward.

The Japanese military had police and I understand that they knew they were going to have to arrest a ton of soldiers but that's their job is it not? the Japanese Emporer should have ordered Military police to take action and hold his military accountable.

I believe this was taken out of books because they felt it would be best to hide this from children. I could understand children's textbooks taking a lighter approach to these stories, however downgrading it from a massacre to an incident is incredibly misleading.

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