

Japanese Reflections on World War II and the American Occupation
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
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Session 1 – Introduction

During this session we will discuss the motivation to dig deep into the lives of Oita Prefecture residents during the War and American occupation and to tell their stories in their own voices. We begin by observing the training exercises for the Pearl Harbor attack as witnessed through the eyes of a small boy in the coastal town of Saiki, and then watch as the people of Oita Prefecture celebrate the attack.

Session 2 - Education and the lives of children

This session explores the daily lives of children in schools, focusing on the expanding emphasis on nationalist, or moral, education imposed by the government. We will also discuss the institution of military training at the schools and assignment to munitions factories, airplane repair facilities and other war effort enterprises.

Session 3 - Soldiers, sailors and Kamikaze

In this session we will explore the lives of young men who, from the early 1930s through 1945, marched off to war in China and throughout the Pacific, with specific focus on the Oita 47th Regiment. Additionally, we will discuss Kamikaze pilots' training and views of their willingness to fly planes into American ships. Concerns and encouragement from family members for their Kamikaze sons will also be explored.

Session 4 - Bombing and war weariness

As the war enters its final year, villages, towns and cities throughout Oita Prefecture endure U.S. bombing and strafing from B29s and Grumman Hellcats. Food and medical supplies diminish and schools cease or curtail instruction at most levels as the populace mobilizes to support the war effort; all the time growing weary and fearful of attacks from the sky. Anger mounts against Americans for the incessant bombing, and rage spills over when U.S. airmen are captured.

Session 5 - Fight to the death and war's end

Fear mounts that the U.S. will send a massive invasion force to the southern shores of Kyushu, home to Oita Prefecture. Military leaders order defense bunkers constructed and military training of the entire populace intensifies. In Tokyo, the Emperor asks his six member military council to advise him on how to end the war. Three of these are from Oita, all of whom oppose surrender. Finally, the Emperor delivers his speech to the people ending the war. Disbelief, fear of the future and a sense of betrayal grip the nation.

Session 6 - Occupation

The Japanese people have no idea what lies in store for them as they await landing of the U.S. forces that will occupy their country. Most fear the worse. After U.S. forces arrive, relative peace is restored and a large Occupation camp is built in Beppu, Oita Prefecture. Hunger prevails and schools reopen, challenging teachers to present new ideas of democracy rather than loyalty to a godlike Emperor. Impressions of those years under occupation will be presented in the words of those who were there.

This course will be informed in large measure by the book *Japanese Reflections on World War II and the American Occupation*, written by Edgar A. and Ran Ying Porter, Amsterdam University Press, 2018.

Additional recommended readings:

- Agawa, Hiroyuki, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 2008.
- Bix, Herbert P., *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2001.
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- Caprio, Mark E. and Yoneyuki Sugiata, *Democracy in Occupied Japan, The U.S. Occupation and Japanese Politics and Society*, New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Cook, Haruko Taya and Theodore F. Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*, New York, The New Press, 1992.
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- Endo, Shusaku, *The Sea and Poison*, Tokyo, Tuttle Publishing, 1972.
- Gibney, Frank, editor, *Senso; The Japanese Remember the Pacific War*, Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 2006.
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- Hoyt, Edwin P., *The Last Kamikaze: The Story of Admiral Matome Ugaki*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1993.
- *Inferno, the Firebombing of Japan, March 9-August 15, 1945*, New York: Madison Books, 2000.
- Kike Wadatsumi no Koe, *Listen to the Voices from the Sea*, Scranton, University of Scranton Press, 2000.
- Matsusaka, Yoshihashi, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904–1932*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- “New Kyushu Museum Breaks Taboo with POW Vivisection Display,” *The Japan Times*, April 4, 2015.
- Peattie, Mark, Edward J. Drea and Hans van de Ven, editors, *The Battle for China, Essays on the Military History of the Sino–Japanese War of 1937–1945*, Redwood City, California: Stanford University Press, 2011.
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- Sloan, Bill, *The Ultimate Battle*, New York: Simon and Shuster, 2007.
- Ugaki, Matome, *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki, 1941–1945*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991.
- Yahara, Colonel Hiromichi, *The Battle for Okinawa*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1995.
- Yamamoto, Masahiro, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000.