

OLLI Spring 2017

The Atomic Bomb and the End of WW II

The recommended reading for all sessions of this class is "Downfall" by Richard B. Frank. This is available on Amazon for \$7.95 and other sellers for \$3.18

March 27 (Week 1) The Origin of WW II in the Pacific

In session one we will have a **very** brief discussion of Japanese history from the first emperor until the beginning of WW II. Special focus will be on the Japanese emergence from a feudal society to a world power in fifty years. We will also examine U.S. and Japanese race relations in detail and the events that led to this catastrophic confrontation. *Optional reading for Session 1: "Fateful Choices" by Ian Kershaw, chapters 3 & 8.*

April 3 (Week 2) Pearl Harbor to Saipan

Few events in history have so galvanized a people as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The U.S. public went from strong isolationist sentiments to a call for total war overnight. In this session we will examine the Japanese war plan and its U.S. counterpart. We will cover the Battle of Midway and how it changed U.S. policy in WW II. We will also discuss the pivotal Battle of Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands that broke Japanese naval power. The session will end with the invasion of Saipan which brought the war to the doorstep of Japan. *Optional reading for Session 2: "Shattered Sword" by Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully, "Guadalcanal" by Richard B. Frank, "Fire in the Sky" and "Touched With Fire" by Eric Bergerud.*

April 10 (Week 3) The Making of the Atomic Bomb and the B29 Superfortress

OK we finally got to the Bomb! I bet you thought we were never going to get there. In this class I will attempt to give a lecture on physics and the scientific as well as the political origins of the atomic bomb. The B29 bomber will also be discussed and how these two weapon systems would change the nature of warfare. *Optional reading for Session 3: "The Making of the Atomic Bomb" by Richard Rhodes, "Blankets of Fire" by Kenneth P. Werrell.*

April 17 (Week 4) Kamikaze and Operation Downfall

Operation Downfall was the U.S. plan to invade Japan and the Kamikaze was the last resort of a nation trying to save something from a war that was well beyond their capabilities to wage. We will examine the human implications of both. *Optional reading for Session 4: "Suicide Squads" by Richard O'Neil.*

April 24 (Week 5) U.S. Air and Sea Power vs. the Japanese Home Islands

With Japanese sea power destroyed the U.S. Navy began to implement the final blockade of Japan. This was called for from the 1906 "War Plan Orange." While the use of the submarine was not envisioned at the time the results were the same, lack of resources and ultimately starvation for the Japanese people. The truly modern aspect of this class was the use of U.S. strategic bombers to destroy Japanese industry, cities, shipping, and eventually all modern methods of transportation. *Optional reading for Session 5: "Blankets of Fire" by Kenneth P. Werrell.*

May 1 (Week 6) Use of the Bomb and Japan's Decision to End the War

In our final session we will examine in detail the use of the atomic bomb and the alternatives to it, from Russian invasion of Japan to the war continuing unabated for years as millions of Japanese army troops refuse to surrender. These include tremendous military casualties for all parties Chinese, British, Russian, and of course the U.S. and Japanese. Further we will look at the loss of life not only of Japanese civilians but Asians in general, from starvation in Vietnam to the terror inflicted by continuation of the war throughout Asia.