

History class taught by John Dower to feature rare World War II Japanese films

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

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HISTORY CLASS TO FEATURE RARE WORLD WAR II JAPANESE FILMS

Students enrolled in a new history course at the University of California, San Diego will have the rare opportunity to see World War II as the Japanese saw it.

The course, "World War Two in Asia--Film, Fantasy, and Fact," taught by John Dower, holder of the Naiman Chair in Japanese Studies, will feature several seldom-seen films made in Japan during the war years.

The six films, including one by internationally famed director Akira Kurosawa, were made between 1938 and 1947.

Dower also plans to show films and cartoons made in the United States during the same period.

"It is quite startling to see Japan's war against China and the West through the eyes of Japanese filmmakers at the time, because losers usually don't get reruns," Dower said. "And our appreciation of the power of cinema propaganda is doubled when the Japanese war films are viewed alongside their American counterparts."

The Japanese films, obtained from the Japan Society in New York and subtitled in English, include two classic propaganda films: "Five Scouts" made in 1938, and "Airplane Drone" made in 1939.

Other films include: "Soldiers at the Front," an experimental documentary made in 1939 about the war in China which was banned from the Japanese Imperial Army, and Kurosawa's film, "The Most Beautiful," a 1944 drama depicting the lives of women workers in an optical lens factory.

One of the highlights of the U.S. films to be shown will be "Know Your Enemy--Japan," directed by Academy Award winner Frank Capra in 1945.

There will be two separate classes each meeting on Monday, beginning September 28, from 1-3:50 p.m. and from 6-9 p.m. Both sessions will be held in Peterson Hall, Room 104. The public is invited to attend the evening class on a space-available basis.

Dower, who was named to the Joseph Naiman Endowed Chair in Japanese Studies at UCSD in 1985, is probably the country's leading authority on the American occupation of Japan and how that occupation changed Japanese society following World War II.

His interests extend not only to modern Japanese history, but include U.S.-Asian relations and Japanese art as well. Dower is the author of "War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War," (Pantheon, 1986), which won the 1986 National Book Critics Circle Award for Non-Fiction, and was one of the five finalists in the non-fiction category of the 1986 American Book Awards.

He has also co-edited a book, "The Hiroshima Murals: The Art of Iri Maruki and Toshi Maruki," and produced a documentary film about those artists called "Hellfire: A Journey from Hiroshima" which received two awards: The Marjorie Benton Peace Film Award, and the Gold Medal for films dealing with Japanese arts and culture in "The 30th Competition for Films on Japan" sponsored by the Japanese Foreign Ministry and "Asahi Shimbun" newspaper.

For further information about the class please contact the UCSD Department of History at 534-1996.

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