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US-Japan Enmity – WWII Wartime Propaganda Posters [History]

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Assignment: US-Japan Enmity – WWII Wartime Propaganda Posters

This assignment was developed in the context of LaGuardia Community College’s NEH funded Meanings of War seminar. The assignment is intended to be used in SSH 110 (East Asian Civilizations), but can also be used in SSH 106 (World History from 1500) and SSH 114 (Modern Japanese History). All three courses are primarily for non-majors and are beginning-level (survey) courses. This assignment comes towards the end of the semester, in week 10 or 11, when we are discussing World War II. This assignment is aligned with the Global Learning core competency, and meets those specific learning objectives by giving students a chance to analyze in-depth one dimension of a global event (the widespread use of propaganda during WWII), and more importantly gets them to consider and negotiate competing perspectives on “the other” during this tumultuous period. It also gets students to consider and analyze the ethical consequences of both propaganda and of censorship by governments.

The assignment is aligned with the Written Communication ability, as students will be graded upon the organization and support of their thesis, the reliability of their sources, and the clarity and fluency of their writing. Students will receive a grading rubric alongside the assignment, so that they are aware of the criteria through which their papers will be evaluated (rubric is attached to this assignment, after the wartime propaganda posters).

This assignment would take approximately two weeks to complete: students would first complete a reading assignment for contextual background on US-Japan enmity in the 1930s-40s (from John Dower’s *War Without Mercy*), would spend one class-session doing the Think/Pair/Share activity, and would have one week to complete the 3-4 page writing assignment. This assignment would be worth 15% of their overall grade (equivalent of a midterm exam).

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the dehumanizing ways that nations depict one another in their wartime propaganda (i.e., how they make it easier to hate and kill the “other”)
- To understand that war is not just about bullets and bombs but that it is also about shaping and controlling images of oneself and one’s enemy in order to facilitate the death and destruction.

- To be aware of the hatred that Japanese and Americans had towards each other during the war. (And how quickly, for the most part, this hatred disappeared in the postwar period. Or at the very, least, how this hatred did not lead to an insurgency against the American Occupation or violence against the Japanese during the Occupation).
- To try to connect blatant racism in propaganda to other forms of dehumanization (e.g., political rhetoric) that continue to be effective tools of warfare.

Target Courses (can be used in all three courses):

SSH 110: East Asian Civilizations

SSH 106: World History from 1500

SSH 114: Modern Japanese History

Assignment: US-Japan Enmity – WWII Wartime Propaganda Posters

Think/ Pair / Share in-class activity, followed by an individual, at-home writing assignment

In Class (low-stakes):

--Distribute WWII propaganda posters to students (3 or 4 copies of each)
--Have students respond to the below questions which they will receive on a worksheet, first on their own and then find classmates with the same poster and compare responses:

- 1) How do nations depict an enemy in wartime propaganda?
- 2) How and why do nations dehumanize an enemy?
- 3) In what ways does propaganda reflect the “real” sentiments of a nation?
- 4) Why do nations try to control and censor the media during wartime?

At home (high-stakes):

Write a 3-4 page (double-spaced) paper that synthesizes the in-class discussion we had about wartime propaganda. **Your paper must have a thesis statement that answers the question: What role did propaganda posters play in US-Japan enmity during WWII?** In other words, your thesis statement will explain your position on the role of wartime propaganda posters. You must use at least two of the distributed posters as evidence supporting your thesis statement, as well as the selection from Dower’s *War Without Mercy* that you read about WWII propaganda. Please use the four discussion questions above to help guide and formulate your original thesis statement.

Writing Assignment Grading Rubric

Dr. Kietlinski

1: Main Idea: There is a clear thesis statement that states a position and can be supported using research and/or evidence from texts. The thesis is clearly stated, effectively placed, and responds directly to the assignment prompt.

___ Excellent ___ Satisfactory ___ Weak ___ Failing

2: Organization and Coherence: The essay is clearly organized, with an introduction, body, and conclusion. Each paragraph addresses one main idea and supports that idea with properly-cited sources. There is an easy-to-follow progression of ideas and clear transitions between paragraphs.

___ Excellent ___ Satisfactory ___ Weak ___ Failing

3: Analysis and Development: The thesis is supported by a combination of details, examples, statistics, and facts. Each main idea is fully elaborated on and clearly supports the essay's thesis.

___ Excellent ___ Satisfactory ___ Weak ___ Failing

4: Voice, Purpose, and Audience: The essay's tone is appropriate for an academic essay. It avoids repetition and uses varied sentence structure.

___ Excellent ___ Satisfactory ___ Weak ___ Failing

5: Incorporation of Sources: Quotations and paraphrases are relevant and taken from appropriate academic sources. Use of quotation marks, in-text citations, and a Works Cited page are complete and formatted according to current MLA guidelines.

___ Excellent ___ Satisfactory ___ Weak ___ Failing

6: Conventions of Standard Written English: The essay has been edited carefully so that mechanical errors such as incorrect grammar, sentence structure, word choice, spelling, punctuation, and/or capitalization do not interfere with the clarity of the essay.

___ Excellent ___ Satisfactory ___ Weak ___ Failing