

Steven Miller  
Political Science Professor  
Modesto Junior College  
2014 Japan Studies Institute Fellow  
Project Summary

The study of Japan can effectively become part of a community college political science curriculum in various ways. My project is to use resources, ideas, and information I gained from the 2014 Japan Studies Institute to enhance three different political science courses I teach. These courses are Political Theory, American Politics, and The Constitution and Rights of Americans. Below is a summary of how I will develop these courses.

**1) Incorporating *Grave of the Fireflies* into a Political Theory Class**

I will have students see the Japanese anime film, *Grave of the Fireflies* in my political theory class. This film is set in Japan toward the end of World War II. The film tells the story of two young Japanese children who lose their parents in the war and have to find a way to survive. In this political theory course, one main section is devoted to a comparison of three approaches related to war and peace. They are realpolitik, just war theory, and non-violence. Adding a classroom screening of *Grave of the Fireflies* will help students see the suffering of children and orphans during war, as well offer a film about World War II from a Japanese perspective. My project involves developing a worksheet for students that has a comprehensive set of discussion questions connected to the film. Students will review these questions before and after we watch the film. And after viewing the film, we will use these questions to guide us

through an engaging class discussion connecting the messages of this film to theories of war, justice, and peace. Students will then be assigned to write an essay using ideas from the film.

## **2) Government Decision-Making and Nuclear Power Plants**

The new lesson plan for my American politics class will address the issue of nuclear power plants. This lesson plan will include a video, lecture, and discussion questions. I will describe the disasters of “3.11” in Fukushima, Japan, and the issue of nuclear power plant safety. Examples of questions I will pose to students are as follows: 1) Should the United States build new nuclear power plants? 2) What kind of measures can be taken to prevent another “3.11”? 3) Should governments build seawalls? This lesson plan will also be connected to the concept of federalism, as well as controversies surrounding nuclear waste storage.

## **3) Incorporating *Only The Brave* into a Political Science Class**

Korematsu v. United States (1944) is one of the cases we analyze in my class on constitutional rights. In this case, the U.S. Supreme Court so unjustly held that the U.S. government could force Japanese-Americans to be relocated to internment camps during World War II. When teaching about this case, I will include a new lesson on the 100th /442nd Regimental Combat Team. This combat team was a segregated unit comprised of second-generation Japanese-Americans. The new lesson will include assigned reading on this combat team; a classroom screening of Lane Nishikawa’s film, *Only the Brave*; a detailed worksheet containing discussion questions; and a writing

assignment. My aim is for students to see how Japanese-Americans were so courageous and sacrificing for America, and how unjust the U.S. Supreme Court was in its decision. In my lesson, special attention will be given to the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.