

JSI Course Projects

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I have two projects incorporating Japan into my German history courses. The first project is to create a new course, "Transnational History: Germany and East Asia." It will deal with German-East Asian relations since the late nineteenth century to the present. Since Japan has had more contacts with Germany than China or Korea did, German-Japanese relations will occupy about forty percent of the course. It will explore German-Japanese relations through various stages. It will start with German influences on Japan's modernization during the Meiji Restoration. Then, it will explore a cooling-off phase between 1880 and 1920s. During World War I, they were enemies and German POWs were interned in Japan. Yet from 1936, their relations became closer, as Nazi Germany changed its alliance from China to Japan. During World War II, their relations were intensified, although they were not as solid as one often expects. After World War II, they shared several similarities. Their economic and cultural ties have become quite close.

My second course project is to incorporate Japan into my Holocaust class. Since 1938, about 18,000 German and Austrian Jews arrived in Shanghai, China, since it was the only place that did not require a visa. Since Japan occupied Shanghai at that time, the German Jews were under Japanese rule. Although Japan was Germany's Axis ally, Japan's attitude towards Jews was different. Although some Japanese learned anti-Semitism from the West, overall Japan's treatments of the German Jews in Shanghai showed a low degree of anti-Semitism. It was due to the lack of Christian anti-Semitic tradition, Japan's positive experience with the Jewish businessman (Jacob Schiff), and close cultural and military exchange between Germany and Japan (It appears that the Japanese did not really distinguish Germans and German Jews). Also the course will explore the Japanese diplomat in Lithuania, Sugihara, who rescued European Jews by giving 2,000 visas to them.