JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
A Bibliographic Instruction Session

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Audience

The audience is a history class of undergraduate students at the University of Denver. The course, World War II History & Memory, is limited to advanced history majors. The students should have completed a number of interdisciplinary core courses during their freshman and sophomore years. They have begun to take more courses in the discipline of history. The University of Denver offers 12 bachelor’s degrees in over 100 fields of study. The number of students majoring in the liberal arts is smaller than in business or the sciences (the History Department currently has about 50 majors). Therefore, upper division history classes are small, and this seminar class has eight students.

Description of Topic

The students have been given an assignment to research and write about the Japanese American Internment Camps during the Second World War. As a part of the resulting paper, areas of focus could include, but are not limited to, the bombing of Pearl Harbor and subsequent entry of the U.S. into the war, Caucasian Americans’ historical attitudes toward Asian ethnic groups, prior incidents of internment camps, the U.S. government’s isolationist stance, the Japanese American family, the events of the Internment, information about specific camps, psychological and social aspects of the Internment, political ramifications, and more recent legislation concerning remuneration.

Students are to research the subject from whatever aspects or angles they want, and to write a paper of their findings. The instructor would like to see in the paper a clear understanding of the background, history, and ramifications of the Japanese American internment, as well as thoughtful opinions as to its necessity and relation to the culture and political climate of the time.
Decision making process for selection

I wanted to review a variety of sources from a few disciplines including history, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Although this class is a history class, I believe that the topic calls for an interdisciplinary approach with a focus on historical research. I reviewed the Penrose Reference section on American History and Asian American History, and the book stacks on Asian Americans, and found a number of good to excellent resources that provide some kind of information about the topic. As necessary for this assignment, and to provide some variety for students, I selected different kinds of print resources from the reference collection and from the book stacks. These include a documentary history; a dictionary; a guide; two encyclopedias; and two chronologies. In addition to the print sources, online resources that I selected include databases from three different categories, and two websites.

Approach to the Topic and Plan for the Class

Because of the different aspects mentioned regarding the topic, the instructor would like the students to begin with an interdisciplinary approach, learn to view the research through the eyes of an historian, and show some original thought in interpreting the events surrounding the internment camps.

To help the students begin their research, I would suggest that they use the more general resources such as the dictionary, the encyclopedias, the documentary history, and the chronologies. The *Dictionary of American History* obviously takes an historical approach, and it provides several topics related to Japanese Americans. The encyclopedias are both historical and sociological in nature. *The Asian American Encyclopedia* provides a focus on Japanese Americans and has a substantial and comprehensive section on the internment experience. *Racial and Ethnic Relations in America* takes a sociological and anthropological approach to race
relations. All three of these resources provide suggested readings (many available at Penrose) for further study. I would then refer the students to the database Sociological Abstracts, a great resource for a number of peer-reviewed articles relating to the topic.

Another somewhat general resource is *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History*, which provides an overview of the internment issue. *The Columbia Documentary History of the Asian American Experience* is a companion to Columbia’s *Guide*. This source takes an historical approach and provides the student a great deal of social history of Asian Americans as well.

I would next present the two chronologies, *American Decades* and *American Decades: Primary Sources*. Looking at historical events from a chronological perspective helps to put them in context and provides greater understanding of the events and their ramifications. The primary source chronology is an excellent way to introduce the use of primary source materials to budding historians. At this point I would also refer the students to the database America: History and Life for access to pertinent articles written by historians, as well as to the newspaper database Chicago Tribune, 1849-1985 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers) for contemporaneous stories.

Finally, I would discuss two websites the students could use to inform their topic. The first, “Behind Barbed Wire at Amache” (http://www.du.edu/anthro/behindbarb/) is an online exhibit located on the University of Denver website that I discovered from the bibliography of one of the print resources. It takes an anthropological as well as historical approach to the removal of Japanese Americans to the 10 internment camps, and provides text and pictures about daily life in the camp located in Colorado. This exhibit is a great place for the students to begin to grasp the context of the Japanese American Internment. Although there are a number of broken links and it does not appear to be maintained, it remains quite a useful resource.
The second website is a government site. The National Archives and Records Administration has a wealth of information about various aspects of American life, and the War Relocation Authority section (http://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/wra.html) gives the user the ability to pull up the record of a specific internee. This site gives the student a glimpse into the kind of government documents that are available.

**Conclusion**

I have provided this undergraduate history class with a number of excellent resources to help them research and write about the Japanese American Internment Camps during the Second World War. These resources are general and specific in nature, interdisciplinary, and also offer variety to accommodate students’ learning styles. The print resources are of course visual and textual; the websites are visual and geared to the younger generation to whom computer literacy is second nature; and the databases contain specific articles for the various issues surrounding this topic. I believe that by using these resources, the students will be greatly helped toward gaining and demonstrating an understanding of the background, history, and ramifications of the Japanese American internment, and be able to utilize critical thinking skills to provide thoughtful opinions as to its necessity and relation to the culture and political climate of the time.
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RESOURCES

**Dictionary**


This dictionary comprises 10 volumes, with each volume listing the contents of the entire set at the beginning. Volume 4 (Girl Scouts to Kwanzaa) contains three main sections pertinent to our topic:

- Japan, Relations With,
- Japanese American Incarceration (a fairly lengthy article), and
- Japanese Americans

A bibliography is provided at the end of each article. After each article are also some “see also” references. For example, under Japanese American Incarceration these are:

- Internment, Wartime – this is a brief history of use of internment in US (also has a bibliography and “see also” references. Another “see also” is the Japanese Internment Camps, 1942 (volume 9). This is a very good resource, and a number of the suggested readings are available at Penrose.

**Encyclopedias**


This is a six-volume set. In Volume 3 (Ho-Kor) a search for Japanese American internment yields 23 pages of text, pictures, graphics, and maps. It also includes a list of 10 slightly annotated suggested readings. This is the best general print resource because it has so much information on our particular subject.


Each volume in this three-volume set has the identical “Categorized List of Entries” in the back. Japanese American Internment provides an overview of the internment decision and its consequences. The encyclopedia also provides “core resources”, many of which are held at Penrose.

**Guide**

This guide takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Asian Americans. In Part Two, Historical Debates, the guide includes an entire section on what it terms the concentration camps. This is very helpful for an overview and details on certain studies undertaken.

**Documentary History**


This extensive documentary history includes a lot of primary source material concerning Asian American culture, court decisions pertaining to Asian Americans, political cartoons, essays, speeches and more from ethnic groups from Japan, China, the Philippines, Hawaii, and Vietnam. Several documents pertaining to the internment are included. It is a companion to *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History*.

**Chronologies**


This is a 10-volume encyclopedia of American culture throughout the decades of the 20th century. Volume 5, 1940-1949, includes several references to Japanese Americans. In the main section entitled “Topics in the News” there is a one-page article on the internment of Japanese Americans. Another helpful article includes America at War: Background to Involvement. A bibliography follows each article. This is a secondary resource that would be most helpful prior to using the companion containing primary resources (below).


This is a 10-volume chronological encyclopedia of primary sources from the 20th century. In reviewing the General Index in the back one locates Japanese American internment assurance of minimal hardships plus 10 more entries, and Japanese Internment and the Law plus three other entries.

Each reference in this encyclopedia gives the name of the primary source article along with its citation, followed by a brief paragraph about the author. There is an introduction to the background to the subject, and then the primary source (for instance, the article, letter, or story itself). Further Resources are listed after the article, including books, periodicals, websites, and audio and visual media. This is an excellent resource for primary material for undergraduate students.
Websites

Behind Barbed Wire at Amache:  http://www.du.edu/anthro/behindbarb/

This website is sponsored by the University of Denver Museum of Anthropology (DUMA) and focuses on Colorado’s Camp Amache. It provides an overview of the decision to evaluate Japanese-Americans from the west coast, shows pictures of everyday life of the internees at this particular camp, and lists sources for further reading and relevant web sites.

Reading this online exhibit provides an anthropological view of the internment experience. Throughout the pages, there are many links to pertinent documents (such as Executive Order 9066) as well as various maps, proclamations, and legislation. There are a couple of broken links on the site, but overall it is an excellent resource containing the following sections: Chronology, History, Decision to Evacuate, Assembly Centers, Internment Camps, Amache, Redress, and Bibliography.

National Archives and Records Administration, War Relocation Authority:  http://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/wra.html

This site can be used to locate records of internees. An excerpt from the site describes the information provided:

These records contain information about Japanese Americans evacuated from the states of Washington, Oregon, and California to ten relocation centers operated by the War Relocation Authority during World War II. Each record represents an individual and includes information such as the individual’s name, relocation project and assembly center to which assigned, previous address, birthplace of parents, occupation of father, education, foreign residence, sex and marital status, race of evacuee and spouse, year of birth, age, birthplace, occupations, file number, and other data.

Perusing this site provides the researcher with some primary source information and gives a flavor of the times in which the internment occurred. It also gives the student a more personal perspective from which to view the Internment.

Online Databases at Penrose

In History Category: America: History and Life

This is an EBSCO database, and the Penrose website describes it as follows:

Indexes and abstracts journal articles, book reviews and dissertations covering the entire period of U.S. and Canadian history (prehistoric-present). Covers literature written since 1964. Over 2,000 journals are indexed.

With over 2,000 journals indexed, one is bound to find useful information in this database, where one can find full text articles under various topics related to the Japanese American internment
experience. Searchable topics include Executive Order 9066, Japanese and Internment; Japanese Americans and World War II. It is a great resource.

In “Newspapers, Historical” Category: **Chicago Tribune, 1849-1985 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers)**
The Penrose description is:

The Chicago Tribune (1849-1985) offers full page and article images with searchable full text back to the first issue. The collection includes digital reproductions providing access to every page from every available issue.

One can search in this database, as well as others from ProQuest. In Chicago Tribune, a search for Japanese Americans in the timeframe 1/1/1942 to 1/1/1947 retrieved 461 documents, many about the Japanese moving inland. This is a great contemporaneous resource providing access to some primary material from the user’s time period of choice.

In Sociology Category: **Sociological Abstracts**
The Penrose description:

Provides abstracts to the latest research sponsored in sociology and related disciplines. The database draws information from an international selection of over 2,600 journals and other serials publications, plus conference papers, books, and dissertations. Major areas of coverage include: community development; culture and social structure; demography; evaluation research; family studies; gender issues; methodology and research; policy studies; social development; social psychology; and social welfare.

With over 2,600 journals to search from, this database is a rich resource for articles from sociology and other disciplines. A search for Japanese and internment retrieves 39 peer reviewed journal articles.