

Response to Papers by Gjerde/McCants and Dower

Fertility, Marriage and Culture:

This paper takes an interesting look at stereotypes people have about immigrant families and birthrates. It makes the argument that the open lands in the west influenced those regions demographics. Using data about marriage ages and birthrates the essay is able to show how there was an explosion in the fertility rates of settlers that slowly normalized during the 19th Century. I felt the paper was extremely well grounded in facts, as its numerous tables were extremely useful and helped back up the arguments made in the writing. The paper does an excellent job of remaining concise as it takes just three Norwegian communities in the Midwest and carefully analyzes the data collected from those groups. The conclusion does a nice job convincing the reader that it is logical to extrapolate these results to the majority of the settlements in the Midwest during the 19th Century.

Japan in War and Peace

This essay was extremely interesting. Currently I am also enrolled in John Dower's class, History of World War II in Asia: Film, Fantasy, Fact, and just heard his lecture on the undercurrents of racism felt toward the Japanese during World War II and found it fascinating. What I feel is so interesting about the subject is that it has been forgotten or overlooked. Today Americans tend to remember the Nazis with contempt or at least as being evil, but the hatred toward the Japanese is overlooked. I think that a couple of graphics could have really improved the article. Prof. Dower showed the class

several such graphics and they are extremely powerful and really enhance the point of the article, especially when showing Hitler, Mussolini, and 'the Jap'. I found the final part of the article extremely interesting as well. I was really interested in his explanation of why we seemed to forget our hatred of Japan during the postwar period. His line that we just transferred our hate from the Japanese to the communists was an extremely interesting conclusion.