

Nikkei Uprooting: A Field School 2025

Professor: Jordan Stanger-Ross
with Catherine Oikawa and Vivian Wakabayashi Rygnestad
and the *Past Wrongs, Future Choices* research collective

TOPIC AND CONTEXT

This course focuses on the uprooting, internment, dispossession, and expulsion of people of Japanese descent (Nikkei) in the 1940s. It explores a history that is simultaneously local and global. In 1942, almost 22,000 Japanese Canadians were displaced from their homes in coastal British Columbia; our course is organized around tour sites where uprooted people were concentrated in the interior of British Columbia. We'll travel alongside guides and participants from the Nikkei community in Canada and learn from community leaders what this history means today. While emphasizing Canada, at various junctures the course also invites participants to consider a global context, as a history both like and unlike that in Canada unfolded in other countries in the 1940s (Nikkei communities were uprooted in Australia, Brazil, the United States, Peru, Mexico, and elsewhere).

History is built into a basic premise of democracy: the idea that societies can improve upon past choices. This process only works if we learn from past wrongdoing, and universities across Canada are working to ensure that we do so by teaching histories of genocide and colonialism. Mass uprooting at times of global conflict – the interweaving of ideas and practices of national security with racism – also demands our attention. The echoes of Nikkei experiences in present-day mass detentions and expulsions make engagement of this history urgently important today.

Your instructors hope that all participants will emerge both informed and inspired. We hope you'll have enhanced knowledge of the history of the internment and dispossession both in Canada and abroad, knowledge that you'll acquire through readings, discussion and assignments, as well as by seeing Canada's internment sites with your own eyes, walking them with your own feet, and meeting people who lived through this history. Our expectation is that, by the end of the course, you will be conversant in the history of internment and incarceration, that is, able to speak about it in an informed and confident fashion. We also hope you feel personal connection with this history that will propel you toward continued study and the pursuit of justice.

The course aims to provide teachers and public educators with tools to teach this history and to encourage peers to teach it as well. To this end, it is co-led by the marvelous *Past Wrongs, Future Choices* team member Catherine Oikawa, a classroom teacher in the Durham District (Ontario), and by distinguished educator and retired principal Vivian Wakabayashi Rygnestad (learn about Vivian [here](#) and Catherine [here](#)).

At the same time, we hope that discussions about classroom and museum teaching will be enriching for students. *Public history*—engagement with the past outside of the academy—provides rich opportunities to interrogate the purpose, importance, and meaning of the past. We hope all students leave the course thinking about the public application of academic learning: What do scholars and partners outside of the academy offer to each other? What roles can historical learning have in broader democratic life and practice?

FORMAT

- Now until July 10: Advance Readings and Reflections
- July 12-18: Tour
- July 21-25: In-class sessions at the University of Victoria
- July 25-August 4: Students enrolled for course credit complete assignments

Assignments (all)

1. Reflection Papers, Due July 10 – 20%
2. Photo Journal, Due July 21 – 30%

Students:

3. Primary Source Analysis, Due in class July 24 – 30%
4. Final paper: Branching out. Due August 4 (with extensions available on request) – 20%

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Teachers:

3. Analysis of Educational Context, Due July 25 – 10%
4. Final Project, Due July 25 – 40%

Course meetings/class structure

Advance Readings and Reflections

Advance Readings July 1-10	<p>Read two sets of materials and write a 1-page reflection in response to each (2 papers in total). All readings are available on the course website.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. History Eric M Adams and Jordan Stanger-Ross <i>Challenging Exile: Japanese Canadians and the Wartime Constitution</i>2. Memory & Heritage<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michael Prior, “Tashme”• Brandon Shimoda, “Prologue: Paper Flowers” and “I See the Memory Outline” in <i>The Afterlife is Letting Go</i>• Kirsten Emiko McAllister, “In Memory of Others” in <i>Terrain of Memory</i> <p>Your two reflections (each one two pages max) are due on July 10, so that your instructors can read them before we set out together.</p>
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Tour

Saturday July 12	Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre
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	<p>6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby</p> <p>1:30 Orientation meeting Icebreakers and hellos</p> <p>2:30 Panel: On translation (Masumi and Emily)</p> <p>4:00 Reception and tour of museum</p> <p>5:00 Panel Presentation: Routes of Remembrance</p> <p>Learn more about the opening day and register here.</p> <p>Dinner on own</p>
Sunday July 13	<p>Steveston Tour</p> <p>9:00 AM Departure from Accent Inns, Burnaby (3777 Henning Dr. Burnaby)</p> <p>or</p> <p>9:45 AM meeting at Tomekichi Elementary School parking lot/Murakami House</p> <p>Dinner on own</p>
July 14-18	<p>Internment Bus Tour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Including two evening Matome sessions – Monday (Osoyoos) and Thursday (Kamloops)

In Class at UVIC

Date	Content and Materials
<p>Monday, July 21</p> <p>Morning: 9:30 AM</p> <p>McPherson Library</p> <p>Digital Commons, 3rd Floor</p>	<p>Tour Recap and Discussion</p>
<p>Afternoon</p>	<p>Teachers continue meeting in McPherson Library Digital Commons, 3rd Floor</p> <p>Consolidating Final Project Ideas (Vivian and Catherine)</p>

	<p>Students meet in MacLaurin Bldg., Rm D111 Working with Primary Sources</p> <p>Photo Journal Assignment Due</p>
<p>Tuesday, July 22</p> <p>Morning: 9:30 AM McPherson Library Digital Commons, 3rd Floor</p> <p>Afternoon</p>	<p>Lecture Discussion: Nikkei Uprooting in the 1940s World</p> <p>Mike Perry-Whittingham and Vivian – JCLS Learning Portal</p> <p>Teachers continue meeting in McPherson Library Digital Commons, 3rd Floor Working Session</p> <p>Students meet in MacLaurin Bldg., Rm D111 Working with Primary Sources (continued)</p>
<p>Wednesday, July 23</p> <p>Morning Logistics TBA</p> <p>Afternoon</p>	<p>Teachers meeting in McPherson Library Digital Commons, 3rd Floor Working Session</p> <p>Students meet in MacLaurin Bldg., Rm D111 Working with Primary Sources</p> <p>Esquimalt Gorge Park – Self Guided Tour and Reflections</p>
<p>Thurs. July 24</p> <p>Morning Logistics TBA</p> <p>Afternoon</p>	<p>Lecture- Discussion: Branching Out – Connections among Histories – Learning by Analogy</p> <p>Teachers continue meeting in McPherson Library Digital Commons, 3rd Floor Finishing Touches</p> <p>Students meet in MacLaurin Bldg., Rm D111 Primary Source Assignment completed in class and submitted</p>

Friday, July 25	Where from here?
Morning: 9:30 AM McPherson Library Digital Commons, 3 rd Floor	Discussion: Recap, next steps, and monitoring success
Afternoon	Class lunch and final celebration Teacher project presentations

Assignment Details

1. Reflection Papers (2): 20% (Due July 10 – before the tour)

To prepare for our trip together, we believe you'll benefit from consideration of (1) the history whose memorial landscape we will visit and (2) our own place as visitors to sites of memory. We ask you to read two types of sources before we set out together and to write two short (max 2 pages) reflection papers on each. The readings are available on our course website.

1. History

- Eric M Adams and Jordan Stanger-Ross, *Challenging Exile: Japanese Canadians and the Wartime Constitution*

2. Memory & Heritage

- Michael Prior, "Tashme"
- Brandon Shimoda, "Prologue: Paper Flowers" and "I See the Memory Outline" in *The Afterlife is Letting Go*
- Kirsten Emiko McAllister, "In Memory of Others" in *Terrain of Memory*

After reading these sources, write two reflection papers. The first (Reflection 1) should address the history of Japanese Canadian uprooting and the second (Reflection 2) should consider what it means for us to visit these sites.

These papers will let us get to know you. They won't be marked for style, and we don't have specific content expectations, except that they relate to the readings. We're curious to hear what you're thinking about as we begin our course together. What in the readings surprises or preoccupies you? How do the readings relate to your expectations, concerns, or worries as we begin our class? How have they informed what you hope to learn next?

2. Photo Journal: 40% (Due Monday, July 21)

The Photo Journal assignment is designed to integrate visual and textual storytelling and to help you to process and analyze your time on the bus tour. As you all know, today's communication landscape is as much visual as it is textual. You'll get a chance in this assignment to use both means to tell a story or explore ideas important to you.

The Photo Journal assignment will be completed during the course, based on photographs (and, if you wish, very short videos) that you will take during the tour component. You're welcome to use your phones to take the photographs, although if some participants have more refined skills/gadgets, which would be wonderful too. The

photographs themselves will not be graded on aesthetic grounds, but rather in terms of your use of them as evidence/illustration of the themes you develop in your journal (see below).

Every day on tour, you'll be expected to select two photographs or videos to represent that day's activities. Please note that the final Photo Journals are usually shared across the class, so use images and thoughts that you are comfortable sharing and that are appropriate to this purpose.

Your full Photo Journal is due at the start of class on Monday July 21; you will submit digitally by email to jstross@uvic.ca. Large files can be sent via WeTransfer or a similar service.

Journals should be comprised of:

1. 10 photographs or videos (2/day on tour). Videos cannot exceed 1 minute in length.
2. Short annotation for each photograph or image (approximately 100 words each, so the total annotation is 1000 words).
3. A short introduction and conclusion (max. 200 words each).

Your journal can be personal and self-reflexive, or more outward-looking and analytic in nature. It will be graded according to the following features, each equally weighted:

1. The introduction articulates clear and compelling guiding questions and/or themes.
2. The journal includes 10 photographs/videos that clearly respond to and relate to the themes/questions of the introduction.
3. Annotations for all photographs/videos are organized, thoughtful, well-crafted, and provide additional information critical for the reader's understanding.
4. Photographs/videos and annotation present a unified and coherent response to guiding questions or themes, telling a coherent story, or conveying a coherent message.
5. The conclusion draws the journal to a close and prompts further reflection.

Assignments 3 & 4 for Students Only

If you are registered as an undergraduate or graduate student, you will have two additional assignments to complete. If you are registered via continuing education, skip to your assignment descriptions below.

3. Primary Source Analysis, 30% (Due in class July 24)

This assignment will be completed in class, July 21-24 (and submitted in class on the 24th).

Primary sources are the raw material of new historical interpretation, and we're meeting in a moment of abundant resources for telling the histories of Nikkei communities in the 1940s, both in Canada and abroad. The *Landscapes of Injustice* database makes available an unprecedented trove on Japanese Canadian history. Densho offers similar resources in the United States. The *Past Wrongs, Future Choices* partnership is currently drawing together collections from across the globe to permit comparative and transnational analyses. The history we're studying is on the verge of being rewritten.

This assignment asks you to participate in this process by analyzing selected primary source collections, which will be provided to you in class on July 21. Each student will choose a curated package of materials from which to work in the class sessions from July 21-24. After these sessions, you'll submit a primary source analysis at the end of

class on Thursday, July 24th. The goal of this assignment is to support each of you in doing a deep dive into a facet of this history and to build your capacity for original analysis of new primary sources.

Schedule (afternoon sessions):

- July 21: Selecting, reading, and beginning to digest your resource package
- July 22: Reading for themes
- July 23: Drawing together an initial analysis
- July 24: In class writing session, in response to a prompt provided at the start of class. Primary source submitted at the close of class.

4. Final Paper: Branching Out, 30% (Due August 4, with extensions available on request)

The final paper asks you to connect what you've learned in this class with another historical topic. Like most of our assignments, this is a reflection paper, in which you're asked to discuss your own experience on the tour, the lessons you took from primary sources, and your selected book. The idea here is to branch out from intensive learning.

Undergraduate students are asked to select one of the following books, while graduate students are asked to select two of them. On the basis of your reading, write a reflection of 5-10 pages (double spaced, 12 pnt font, etc.) in response to either one or both of these broad questions: How did your experience and learning in this course affect your reading of your chosen book? Conversely, how does the book affect your retrospective view of the course?

Book options (all available on the UVic Library Website, except Brandon Shimoda's book – which I'll try to get!):

- Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Harvard University Press, 2018) – The history of Nikkei in North America is inextricably tied with that of Chinese migrants. The winner of multiple awards, this book invites students to consider the long history of violent exclusionist politics and practice directed at Chinese Americans.
- Eiichiro Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier: Japanese America and Settler Colonialism in the Construction of Japan's Borderless Empire* (University of California Press, 2019) – One of the most influential recent books in Nikkei history, this book will allow students to place the Japanese Canadian story within a Pacific context.
- Constance Backhouse, *Reckoning with Racism: Police, Judges, and the RDS Case* (UBC Press, 2022). This readable book by one of Canada's leading legal historians examines a case in which a police officer alleged that he had been the victim of anti-white racial bias on the part of a Black judge.
- Brandon Shimoda, *The Afterlife is Letting Go* (City Lights Books, 2024). You'll have read a couple of sections of this book before our first meetings, so you'll have a good sense of it. I find it brilliant, elegant, and challenging.
- Crystal Gail Fraser, *By Strength, We Are Still Here: Indigenous Peoples and Indian Residential Schooling in Inuvik, Northwest Territories* (University of Manitoba Press, 2024) – This book approaches residential school history from an Indigenous perspective, emphasizing the strengths of Indigenous students, families and communities and offering an important juxtaposition to the 1940s experience of Japanese Canadians.

Assignments 4 for Teachers and Public Educators

Supplementary assignments for teachers and professional educators, enrolled with Continuing Studies.

For your final assignment, we encourage that teachers and educators to produce something that will be helpful to you in classrooms and educational settings moving forward. To this end we invite you to:

3. Write a short **Analysis of the Educational Context** in which you're operating (1-2 pages, 10% of final grade)

This is an opportunity for you to think about the context within which you teach the history of Nikkei people within your locale. In some cases, the state, province, territory, or prefecture will mandate teaching about Nikkei history, but this is not always the case. This assignment asks you to reflect on your specific context and consider how that will shape the way you teach this history. Please include the following while telling us more about the context in which you teach:

- A. Location
 - School, Museum, other institution(s)?
 - Urban or rural environment?
 - Large student population or small?
- B. Age/Grade Level of Students
 - One grade/age level or multiple?
- C. Curriculum Connections
 - National/State (Province, Prefecture, Territory) curriculum
 - Where is your entry point for your students?
- D. Your mission or mandate
 - Why are you teaching this history?
 - i. Is it mandatory or are you choosing to do so?
- E. Key Question(s)
 - If you were to identify one key question that would direct student learning what would that be?
- F. Resources
 - What resources currently exist in your jurisdiction that will support teachers/educators in teaching this history?
 - Are there people with lived experience of this history in your region who might share their experiences with a class? What other community-based resources exist?
 - What is missing or difficult to find?
 - How might you leverage the networks in PWFC to support the development of new teaching materials?

4. Complete a **Final Project** (40%)

In the afternoons from July 21-24, teachers will work on either group projects, or individual projects of their choosing. Teachers are encouraged to propose their projects (either as individuals or as groups) during the bus-tour component of the course. They must be approved by Catherine or Vivian by the end of the class session on Monday July 21. You then have three intensive days to work on them and present your final projects to your peers on Friday July 25.

While we encourage group work (most great accomplishments result from people working together), we also want to encourage you to use this time as best suits your ability to (1) teach the history of Nikkei uprooting when you return home, and (2) to disseminate materials to educators in your home communities. If these goals are best met by your working alone, then that is fine too.

Some examples of suitable projects include:

(1) Creating or producing materials for the environments in which you teach. We'll be especially thrilled with a group that includes educators from different countries and is able to envision together how resources might tie the histories of Nikkei people and internments in each country together in an integrated resource (but single nation projects are welcome too).

(2) A project that links the history of Nikkei internments with other histories of injustice or social justice issues today, which might be suitable for students or learners in your teaching environments (this could, of course, be combined with option 1).

(2) Launching a blog (or Instagram feed, or whatnot): We hope that you'll leave this class empowered, inspired, and able to teach this history yourself, but we'd also like you to serve as an ambassador for the teaching of this material more broadly. We'd like you to "put yourself out there." As an option for the final project, you could launch a blog (or something similar), perhaps using your photo journal as a starting point. Again, you can work in groups if you like.

(3) Anything else that seems productive. As an individual, or in groups, you can propose to your instructors your own Final Project ideas. As long as they're commensurate with the aims of the course, we should be able to make something work.