

Syllabus for History 104 Introduction to Japanese History

Instructor: Viren Murthy

Meeting Times: MW: 4:00-5:15 pm

Room: Humanities 1641

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 5:20-6:20

Office: Mosse Building 4108

Email: vmurthy2@wisc.edu

TA: Zhijun Ren

Course Description and Learning Goals:

If one asks ten people what “Japan” means to them, one might get ten different answers. Manga, anime, Japanese film, samurai, Zen Buddhism, tea ceremony among other phenomena are all associated with Japan. One might ask to what extent we can find something unifying these seemingly diverse practices. In this course, we will discuss the meaning of some of these practices in historical context and also how some of these practices overlapped at various points in history. For example, Japanese films often depicts the history of Japan, including that of the samurai, the tea-ceremony expresses ideals from Zen Buddhism and the samurai often performed the tea-ceremony.

Through looking at these and other practices associated with Japan, the course aims to introduce students to the culture, politics and intellectual currents in Japan from ancient times to the present. After this introduction, students should be well-equipped to form their own opinions about Japan.

The course will allow students to analyze writings about history and to construct historical arguments. Students will also learn to think historically about politics and culture, not only in Japan, but in the world.

Among the larger questions we will ask include: How do we periodize Japanese history? How should we understand “modern” Japan in relation to its premodern past? The implications of these questions go well beyond Japan.

The more specific themes we will study include: whether we can talk about a unique Japanese culture, the influence of China on Japan and how Japan’s relation to China and East Asia changes throughout history, the emergence of a samurai/shogunal system in Japan, Zen Buddhism, Japanese Confucianism and national learning in the Edo period (1604-1868), Japanese imperialism and its legacies for the present, and the cultural, intellectual and artistic changes that took place in various periods of Japanese history.

Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Final Exam (Take home) 30%

Paper: 20%

You are expected to attend all classes and the instructor and TA will randomly take attendance. You are also expected to respond to questions during the lecture by the instructor and participate in the discussion sections with the TA.

There are three exams and one paper in this class. The first two exams will be in class and will consist of short answer and essay questions. The final exam will be a cumulative take home exam, which will consist of two essay questions. They will be open questions, which should give students an opportunity to express what they have learned over the semester.

Students will also be responsible for writing a paper (5-7 pages, Times New Roman Font 12, Double-Spaced) on a topic of their choice. The topic can also be an expansion of one of the essay questions on the mid-term exam.

Students should definitely do some outside research for this paper, but the student can decide whether s/he would like to base the project on primary or secondary works. Students should attempt to construct their own thesis about the topic and defend their position with an argument. Students are encouraged to meet with the TA or the instructor as they formulate their ideas and topics. (Remember: We enjoy hearing about your ideas, so do not hesitate in coming to meet us.)

While topics may vary, here are some possibilities:

Did Zen Buddhism play an important role in samurai life? If so, why?

The Nara and Heian courts took the Chinese Tang dynasty as a model. How do you explain the transformation of the Chinese model in Japan?

Japan's position in the world changed in the 20th century. How do you explain this shift?

There are those who describe Japanese imperialism as "imperialism against imperialism." Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

Did the position of women in Japan improve in the 20th century? Why or why not?

Notice that each of these questions encourages you to formulate a thesis, which will defend in the argument of your paper. As you do the readings for the course, you should be able to formulate questions that interest you.

Required Text:

Shirokauer, Lurie and Gay, *A Brief History of Japanese Civilization*. Available at the bookstore

All other readings will be on the Learn@UW website.

Schedule:

(Instructor may alter dates and readings during the course of the semester)

The readings specified must be done before that day of class.

Week 1: Beginnings and Foundations

Sept. 2 Introduction

Japan and the Japanese

*What is Japan? Who are the Japanese?

PART I: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Week 2: The Birth of Japanese Civilization

Sept. 7 Holiday-Labor Day

Sept. 9 Jomon and Prehistoric Japan

*What can we say about pre-historic Japan? How does one study history before written records are there?

Week 3: Emergence of the Early State and the Influence of China: Nara and Heian Periods

Sept. 14 Chinese and Korean Backgrounds

Nara as Center

Shirokauer, 17-31

Sept. 16 Nara continued and Heian-- Rise of Fujiwara—Problems of the Heian

Shirokauer, 31-42, 46-62

* Who were the Fujiwara? How did they obtain power?

Week 4: Birth of the Kamakura

Sept. 21

Film— Sansho the Bailiff

Read Story and background essays

Note how the film depicts class and gender distinctions in medieval Japan

Sept. 23 End of the Heian and beginning of Kamakura

Shirokauer, 62-72, 72-79

*How did the Kamakura period emerge from the Heian period?
Who are the Samurai?

Week 5: Kamakura Period Contd

Sept. 28 Religion in Kamakura

Shirokauer, 79-91

Sept. 30 Culture of the Samurai and Religion

*How does one understand religion in the Kamakura period?

Week 6: Dogen and Zen Buddhism

Oct. 5 Dogen's Buddhism

Shobogenzo and Genjokoan

Shirokauer, 91-112

Oct. 7 Dogen contd.

*What are the key ideas in Zen Buddhism and Dogen?
Why would Samurai be interested in Zen?

Week 7: Muromachi and its arts

Oct. 12 Muromachi Japan
Tea Ceremony, Noh Drama and Renga
Read Steven Heine on Chikamatsu-Death.

Oct 14 Continue discussion of art and review for exam

*What are some of the key characteristics of Japanese art and why did they develop during the Muromachi period?

Week 8: Transition to the Early Modern Period

Oct 19 Exam I

Oct 21 Warring States period and Onin War

*What happens to the shogunal system during the Warring States period?
Who are the Daimyo?

PART II: EARLY MODERN JAPAN and MODERN JAPAN

Week 9: Oda Nobun and the Beginnings of Early Modern Japan

Oct 26 Oda Nobun

Shirokauer, 113-114

Oct 28 Toyotomi Hideyoshi

Shirokauer, 114-117

*How did centralized power re-emerge in Japan?

*Who were the unifiers of Early Modern Japan? How did they accomplish their task?

Week 10: The Transition to Tokugawa Japan

Nov. 2 Tokugawa Japan

Shirokauer, 129-141, 141-151,

Nov. 4 Ogyu Sorai and Ito Jinsai

* What was significant about Tokugawa Japan? How did it affect intellectual trends?

*In what ways, do Sorai and Jinsai represent a type of turn towards modernity?

Week 11: National Learning, Hiraga Gennai and the Meiji Restoration

Nov. 9 Motoori Norinaaga and Hiraga Gennai
Read Motoori and Hiraga

TRANSITION TO MODERN JAPAN

Nov. 11 Meiji Restoration

Shirokauer, 168-181

Read essay on “Saigo Takamori in Meiji Japan”

Hastings, “Empress’s Clothes”

Richard Devine, “Way of the King,”

* What happens to the relation to China and the West, especially with Motoori Norinaga and Hiraga Gennai? What is the role of sound in Motoori’s thought?

* What were the causes of the Meiji Restoration? How was the Meiji emperor different from previous emperors?

Week 12: Meiji Liberalism and Fukuzawa Yukichi

Nov. 16 Fukuzawa Yukichi

Read Fukuzawa Yukichi selections

Nov. 18 Fukuzawa contd.

*How did Fukuzawa Yukichi rethink Japan’s place in the world? What was his vision of civilization?

Week 13: Exam and Sino-Japanese War

Nov. 23 Exam II

Nov. 25 Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War

Shirokauer, 181-196

Week 14: Japan Enters the 20th Century, Taisho and Showa Japan

Nov. 30 Okakura Tenshin’s Pan-Asianism and Taisho Japan

Rustom Barucha, *Another Asia*, Oxford University Press, 2009, Chapter on Okakura Tenshin.

Richard Reitan, “Claiming Woman”

Dec. 2: Taisho Japan and World War II

Shirokauer, 207-220

Han, "Liberal Empire in East Asia"

Henry Smith, "The Non-liberal Roots of Taisho Democracy"

*What was the significance of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars? How did Japan's place in the world change after these wars?

*How did Pan-Asianism serve to support World War II?

Week 15: Postwar Japan

Dec. 7 American Occupation and the Japanese Reaction

Shirokauer, 232-242

Dec. 9 Sakamoto Kyu and the problem of J-pop.

Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Nippon*, chapter on Sakamoto Kyu

Week 16 Contemporary Japan and the Problem of Remilitarization

Dec. 14 The Debates Around Article 9

Toshiya Takahashi, "Japanese Neo-Conservatism", *Security Challenges*, Vol 6.3, 2010. 21-40.

Shirokauer, 262-267

Final paper due

Take Home Final given in class due 12/18 by 5pm