

Syllabus for History 104 (4 Credits)
Introduction to Japanese History
Online Version

Instructor: Viren Murthy
Meeting Times: Online—Asynchronous
Office Hours: Thursday 4:00-6:00
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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. Can we 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.

Credit Hours and Policy

This 4-credit course meets as a group for 4 hours per week (each 75 minute segment of lecture and discussion counts as one hour according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this class.

Grading and Requirements:

Watching Lectures, Writing Reading Responses and Commenting on Reading Responses:
30%

Quizzes: 10% (two quizzes 5% each)

Mid-Term Exam (Take-Home): 20%

Final Exam (Take Home) : 20%

Paper: 20%

Grading Scale:

94-100 A

90-93 AB

83-89 B

80-83 BC

73-79 C

70-73 CD

60-70 D

Below 60 F

Meet the Professor Requirement:

Each Student is required to visit my office hours or make an appointment to see me at least twice during the semester. Each meeting will be for five to 10 minutes. (This will be in addition to voluntary meetings to discuss papers and exams.) The first meeting will be general and we can discuss various issues in the course and I would like to get to know what you find interesting about East Asia. The second will be more focused on the paper you are going to write. Before the second meeting, students should submit either an outline or a draft of their paper for discussion. The first meeting should be during weeks one through seven and the second should be during weeks seven through the end of the semester. Because there are many students in the class, I urge you to make appointments early.

Assignments, Quizzes and Exams

Because of the pandemic, this class will not meet in class, but the instructor will upload lectures, power point or videos before the time of the class on Tuesday and Thursday. For this reason, we have organized the syllabus around Tuesday and Thursday lectures. You are expected to watch all the videos/power point and complete the assignments, which the instructor or the TA will check.

Participate by Writing Discussion Posts and Responding to your peer's Comments

Each power point will end with some discussion questions that you are to answer on Canvas. Each post should be approximately 250 words and is an important part of your grade. These posts are due on every Wednesday and Friday by 5pm. For each session, you are also required to comment on a fellow classmate's post. The comment should be about 100 words and can either disagree with a point or develop some of the ideas in it. These replies are due by Wednesday at 10pm and Friday at 10 pm. Given that your fellow students might be commenting on your work, I strongly urge you to turn in your discussion posts on time.

Participate in Discussion Sections with your TA

Quizzes and Exams

There are two quizzes, two exams and one paper in this class. The quizzes will be short answer or multiple choice and be found on Canvas. The mid-term exam and final exam will be a cumulative take home exam, which will consist of essay questions. They consist of open questions, which should give students an opportunity to express what they have learned over the semester.

Paper

All students will write a paper, (5-7 pages, 10-15 pages for honors, Times Roman Font 12, double space) on a topic of your choice.

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 you 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.

History Lab

The History Lab will be an excellent place to improve your writing assignments because it is a resource center where experts (PhD students) will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process — choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts — the History Lab staff can help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Schedule a one-on-one consultation at <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab> or drop by Humanities 4255.

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.

PART I: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Week 1: Beginnings and Foundations

Jan. 26 Introduction

Japan and the Japanese

*Introduction to the Course

Jan. 28 Jomon and Prehistoric Japan

Shirokauer, 6-8.

William Farris, *Japan to 1600*, 1-9.

Week 2: The Birth of Japanese Civilization and Political Struggle

Feb. 2 Yayoi Period and Kofun

Gina Barnes, *State Formation in Japan*, 77-88
Shirokauer, 9-13.

Feb. 4 Early State I: Yamato and Asuko Periods

Karl Friday, *Japan Emerging*, 98-103
Shirokauer, 17-25

Shotoku Constitution (Handout)

*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

Feb. 9 Early State II: Taika Reforms

Shirokauer, 25-29
Yoshie “Gender in Ancient Japan”

Feb. 11 Nara Unification

Shirokauer, 30-43
Handout on Todaiji

Week 4: Heian period

Feb. 16 Heian Period

Shirokauer, 47-56
Essay on Property and Gender in the Heian

Feb. 18 Heian Period

Shirokauer, 56-67
Kasulis on Kukai

Week 5: Kamakura Period and Religion, Dogen and Zen Buddhism

Feb. 23 Kamakura I Quiz Ancient Japan (given on Thursday by 4pm and due Thursday by 10 pm—You have one hour to finish the quiz. The actual quiz should take less than 30 minutes)

Shirokauer, 70-75
Friday, 189-203

Feb. 25 Kamakura II

75-78

Friday, 203-213

*How did the Kamakura period emerge from the Heian period?

Who are the Samurai?

Week 6: Kamakura Buddhism and Muramachi Period

March 2 Kamakura Buddhism I—Pure Land Buddhism

Honen, *Sources of the Japanese Tradition*, 222-230

March 4 Kamakura Buddhism II

Shirokauer, 78-88

Read Dogen--Shobogenzo and Genjokoan
“Dogen and Ethics”

*How does one understand religion in the Kamakura period?

*What are the key ideas in Zen Buddhism and Dogen?

Why would Samurai be interested in Zen?

Week 7: Quiz and Transition to early Modern Period

March 9 Kenmu Restoration and Ashikaga Muromachi Period

Quiz 2 Buddhism and the Kamakura Period—Quiz will be available at 4pm and you must finish it by 10 pm (you have one hour to finish the quiz)

Read *Sources*, 280-3

Shirokauer, 92-110

March 11 Muromachi Japan Contd.

Read “Ashikaga Yoshimitsu’s Foreign Policy”

*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 and Oda Nobunaga

March 16 Warring States period and Oda Nobunaga

Shirokauer, 113-117

Read Wakita Osamu, “Sixteenth Century State formation”

March 18 Midterm Exam

*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: Tokugawa Japan

March 23 Toyotomi Hideyoshi

Read Handout of Hideyoshi's Sword Edict
Shirokauer, 113-119

March 25 Tokugawa Japan

Shirokauer, 129-141,
Read David Howell, "Territoriality and Collective Identity"

*How did centralized power re-emerge in Japan?

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

Week 10: Tokugawa Critique of Neo-Confucianism

March 30 Japanese Confucianism and Ogyu Sorai

Read Ogyu Sorai
Shirokauer, 141-151

April 1 Film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgnJcy0Y6fA>
Katsuya Hirano, *The Politics of Dialogic Imagination*, Chapter 2

* 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: Transition to Modern Japan and the Meiji Restoration

April 6 Motoori Norinaaga

Read Motoori Norinaga
Shirokauer, 153-161

April 8 Meiji Restoration

Read essay on "Saigo Takamori in Meiji Japan"
Susan Hastings, "Empress's Clothes"
Sakata Yoshio, "Changes in the Concept of the Emperor"

* Japan's relation to China and the West change, especially with Motoori Norinaga? 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: Fukuzawa Yukichi and Sino-Japanese War

April 13 Fukuzawa Yukichi

Read Fukuzawa Yukichi selections

Shirokauer, 153-182

April 15 Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War

Shirokauer, 193-103

Howland, "Sino-Japanese War as Civilized War"

*What was the significance of the Sino-Japanese War both for Japan and globally? How did the Russo-Japanese War change how other Asian nations viewed Japan?

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

Week 13: Taisho and World War II

April 20 Taisho Japan

Shirokauer, 203-219

Jung Sun Han, "Liberal Empire in East Asia"

Richard Reitan, "Claiming Personality: New Women in the Taisho Period"

Optional:

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

April 22 Pan-Asianism and World War II

Shirokauer, 219-234

Hotta, "Rash Behari Bose"

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

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

April 27 Postwar Japan: American Occupation and Japanese Responses

Read Lawrence Olsen, "Takeuchi Yoshimi and the Vision of a Protest Society"

Shirokauer, 234-256

April 29: The Legacy of Japanese History in Contemporary Japan

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

Lilia Yamakawa "Yasukuni Shrine and Nationalism" at

<https://japansociology.com/2013/11/15/yasukuni-shrine-and-nationalism/>

Optional:

Michael Bourdagh, "Sakamoto Kyu and the Translations of Rockabilly"

Shirokauer, 262-267

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

Final Paper Due by 5pm on April 29

Take home exam given in Class and Due by May 3 at 5pm