

**Syllabus for History 104 (4 Credits)**  
**Introduction to Japanese History**

**Instructor:** Viren Murthy

**Meeting Times:** TuThu 4-5:15

**Office Hours:** TuThu 5:20-6:20

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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 Japanese people combined them in various ways. For example, take samurai, tea-ceremony and Zen Buddhism. The samurai are usually associated with combat, while the tea ceremony and Zen Buddhism are usually linked to imperial and aristocratic culture. However, we will note how imperial culture, aristocratic practices, and Zen Buddhism in particular, were essential to the identity of the samurai. In this way, Japanese culture brings seemingly separate and contradictory practices together in a unique constellation, which continues to inform many facets of life in Japan.

Through looking at 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:**

Coming to Lectures, Writing Reading Responses and Commenting on Reading Responses: 30%

Quizzes: 10% (two quizzes 5% each)

Mid-Term Exam (In-Class): 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

### **Assignments, Quizzes and Exams**

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

Each week a number of readings will be assigned and you are to respond to these readings in posts. Each post should be approximately 200-250 words and is an important part of your grade. These posts are due on every Monday and Wednesday by 5pm. They are not meant to cause you stress but the goal is to get you to start thinking about the

material. In your posts, you might answer the questions posted on the syllabus after every week. For each session, you are also required to comment on a fellow classmate's post. The comment should be about 50-100 words and can either disagree with a point or develop some of the ideas in it. These replies are due by Tuesday at 10pm and Thursday 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 given on canvas. They will be completed outside of class. The mid-term exam will be in class essay questions 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Canvas 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**

**Sept. 6 No Class**

**Sept. 8 Introduction**

Japan and the Japanese

\*Introduction to the Course

**Week 2: Jomon, Prehistoric Japan and  
The Birth of Japanese Civilization**

**Sept. 13 Jomon,**

Shirokauer, 6-8.

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

**Sept. 15 Yayoi Period and Kofun**

Gina Barnes, *State Formation in Japan*, 77-88

Shirokauer, 9-13.

\*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**

#### **Sept. 20 Early State I: Yamato and Asuka Periods**

Shirokauer, 17-25

Karl Friday, *Japan Emerging*, 98-103

Shotoku Constitution (Handout)

#### **Sept. 22 Early State II: Taika Reforms**

Shirokauer, 25-29

Yoshie "Gender in Ancient Japan"

### **Week 4: Nara and Heian periods**

#### **Sept. 27 Nara State**

Shirokauer, 30-43

Handout on Todaiji

#### **Sept. 29 Heian Period**

Shirokauer, 47-56

Essay on Property and Gender in the Heian

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

#### **Oct. 4 Heian Period II**

Shirokauer, 56-67

Kasulis on Kukai

#### **Oct. 6 Kamakura I Quiz Ancient and paleolithic Japan (Due Oct 6, 10pm)**

Shirokauer, 70-75

Friday, 189-203

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

Who are the Samurai?

### **Week 6: Kamakura Buddhism and Muramachi Period**

#### **Oct. 11 Kamakura II**

Shirokauer, 75-78

Friday, 203-213

## **Oct 13 Kamakura Buddhism I—Pure Land Buddhism Kamakura**

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

\*How does one understand religion in the Kamakura period?

### **Week 7: Transition to early Modern Period**

#### **Oct. 18 Buddhism II--Dogen**

Shirokauer, 78-88

Read Dogen--Shobogenzo and Genjokoan

“Dogen and Ethics”

#### **Oct. 20 Kenmu Restoration and Ashikaga Muromachi Period**

**Quiz 2 Buddhism and the Kamakura Period—Quiz “Medieval Period” will be available at 4pm and you must finish it by 10 pm**

Read *Sources*, 280-3

Shirokauer, 92-110

\*What was the significance of the Kenmu Restoration?

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

Why would Samurai be interested in Zen?

### **Week 8: Transition to the Early Modern Period and Oda Nobunaga**

#### **Oct. 25 Muromachi Japan Contd.**

Read “Ashikaga Yoshimitsu’s Foreign Policy”

\*Who was the King of Japan?

#### **Oct. 27 Midterm Exam**

## **PART II: EARLY MODERN JAPAN and MODERN JAPAN**

### **Week 9: Tokugawa Japan**

#### **Nov. 1 Warring States period and Oda Nobunaga**

Shirokauer, 113-117

Read Wakita Osamu, “Sixteenth Century State formation”

#### **Nov. 3 Toyotomi Hideyoshi**

Read Handout of Hideyoshi’s Sword Edict

Shirokauer, 113-119

\*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**

#### **Nov. 8 Tokugawa Japan**

Shirokauer, 129-141,

Read David Howell, "Territoriality and Collective Identity"

#### **Nov. 10 Film**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgnJcy0Y6fA>

Katsuya Hirano, *The Politics of Dialogic Imagination*, Chapter 2

### **Week 11: Transition to Modern Japan and the Meiji Restoration**

#### **Nov. 15 Japanese Confucianism and Ogyu Sorai**

Read Ogyu Sorai

Shirokauer, 141-151

#### **Nov. 17 Motoori Norinaaga**

Read Motoori Norinaga

Shirokauer, 153-161

\*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?

\* Japan's relation to China and the West change, especially with Motoori Norinaga?

What is the role of sound in Motoori's thought?

### **Week 12: Fukuzawa Yukichi and Sino-Japanese War**

#### **Nov. 22 Meiji Restoration**

Read essay on "Saigo Takamori in Meiji Japan"

Susan Hastings, "Empress's Clothes"

Sakata Yoshio, "Changes in the Concept of the Emperor"

**Nov. 24 Fukuzawa Yukichi**

Read Fukuzawa Yukichi selections  
Shirokauer, 153-182

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

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

**Week 13: Taisho and World War II**

**Nov. 29 Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War**

Shirokauer, 193-103  
Howland, "Sino-Japanese War as Civilized War"

**Dec. 1 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"

\*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 should we understand New Woman in the Taisho period?

**Week 14: Japan Enters the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Taisho and Showa Japan**

**Dec. 6 Pan-Asianism and World War II**

Shirokauer, 219-234  
Hotta, "Rash Behari Bose"

**Dec. 8 Postwar Japan: American Occupation and Japanese Responses**

Read Lawrence Olsen, "Takeuchi Yoshimi and the Vision of a Protest Society"  
Shirokauer, 234-256

\*What is pan-Asianism?

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

**Week 15: Japan Enters the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Showa Continued.**

**Dec. 13** 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 do we understand the significance of Japanese history today?

**Final Paper Due by 5pm on Dec. 13**

**Take home exam given at the end of class on Dec. 13 and Due by Dec. 16 at 5pm**