

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

Instructor: Viren Murthy

Meeting Times: TuThu 4:00-5:15 pm (Room Humanities 1641)

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

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Course Description:

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 how Japanese people combined them in various ways. For example, take aristocratic cultural practices such as, 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.

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.

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.

Learning Goals

- 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.

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, Discussion Sections, 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:

A: 93-100, AB: 88-92, B: 83-87, BC: 78-82, C: 70-77, D:60-69, F: 0-59.

Assignments, Quizzes and Exams

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

Each week several 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 before class. In your posts, you might answer the questions posted on the syllabus or during class. 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 Monday at 10pm and Wednesday 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 in 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 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.

Academic Honesty Policy

One of the fundamental principles of this university is that "academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin system" (Wisconsin Administrative Code 14.01). Plagiarism is...

- Using someone else's words or ideas without proper documentation.
- Copying some portion of your text from another source without proper acknowledgement of indebtedness (NOTE: This includes AI software such as ChatGPT).
- Borrowing another person's specific ideas without documenting their source.
- Having another person correct or revise your work. This differs from getting feedback from a writing group, or from an individual, which you then attempt to implement.
- Turning in an assignment written by another person, from an essay "service," or from a website (including reproductions of such essays or papers).

Students will fail the course if they plagiarize.

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.

Readings:

All 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. 3 No Class

Sept. 5 Introduction

Japan and the Japanese

*Introduction to the Course

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

Sept. 10 Jomon

Shirokauer, 6-8.

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

Sept. 12 Yayoi Period and Kofun

Friday, 71-88

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. 17 Early State I: Yamato and Asuka Periods

Shirokauer, 17-25

Karl Friday, *Japan Emerging*, 98-111

Shotoku Constitution (Handout)

Sept. 19 Early State II: Taika Reforms

Shirokauer, 25-29

Yoshie “Gender in Ancient Japan”

*How did the early Japanese state form? How did the role of women change in early Japan?

Week 4: Nara and Heian periods

Sept. 24 Nara State

Handout on Todaiji

Sept. 26 Heian Period

Kasulis on Kukai

*What are the characteristics of the Heian period?

Week 5: End of the Heian and the Kamakura Period

Oct. 1 Heian Period II

Essay on Property and Gender in the Heian

Oct. 3 Kamakura I Quiz Ancient and paleolithic Japan in class

Friday, 189-203

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

Who are the Samurai?

Week 6: Kamakura Continued

Extra Credit Assignment

Monday, October 7 Cemil Aydin talk “Pan-Asianism, Pan-Islamism”
4:15pm

Oct. 8 Kamakura II

Friday, 203-213

Oct 10 Film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI7nzqo-GfM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7CCdEWOJjc>

*Who are the Hojo regents? Why are they significant?

Week 7: Kamakura Buddhism and Kenmu Restoration

Oct. 15. Dogen

Dogen--Shobogenzo and Genjokoan

“Dogen and Ethics”

Oct. 17 Kenmu Restoration and Ashikaga Muromachi Period

Quiz 2 Buddhism and the Kamakura Period—

Sources, 280-3

*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: Muromachi Period and Midterm

Oct. 22 26 Muromachi Japan

Charlotte von Versucher, “Ashikaga Yoshimitsu’s Foreign Policy”

*Who was the King of Japan?

Oct. 24 Midterm Exam

PART II: EARLY MODERN JAPAN and MODERN JAPAN

Week 9: Early Modern Japan: The Azuchi-Momoyama Period

Oct. 29 Warring States period and Oda Nobunaga

Wakita Osamu, “Sixteenth Century State formation”

Oct. 31 Toyotomi Hideyoshi

Handout of Hideyoshi’s Sword Edict

*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 Japan and Tokugawa Confucianism

Nov. 5 Tokugawa Japan

David Howell, “Territoriality and Collective Identity”

Nov. 7 Japanese Confucianism and Ogyu Sorai

Ogyu Sorai

*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 and the Meiji Restoration

Nov. 12 Motoori Norinaaga

Motoori Norinaga selections

Nov. 14 Film

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

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

*What is “National Learning?”

Week 12: The Meiji Restoration: Transition to Modern Japan

Nov. 19 Meiji Restoration

“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?

Extra Credit Assignments

Timothy Brennan Talk Nov. 20, 4:00pm

Keya Ganguly Talk Nov. 21, Noon.

Nov. 21 Fukuzawa Yukichi and Kotoku Shusui

Fukuzawa Yukichi selections

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

Week 13: Sino-Japanese War and Taisho Japan

Nov. 26 Sino-Japanese War, Russo-Japanese War and Taisho Japan

Howland, "Sino-Japanese War as Civilized War"

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?

Nov. 28 Thanksgiving

Week 14: World War II and Pan-Asianism

Dec. 3 Pan-Asianism and World War II

Hotta, "Rash Behari Bose"

Dec. 5 Postwar Japan: American Occupation and Japanese Responses

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

*What is pan-Asianism?

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

Week 15: Contemporary Japan

Dec. 10 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"

*How do we understand the significance of Japanese history today?

Final Paper Due by 4pm on Dec. 10 (by class time)

Take home exam given at the end of class on Dec. 10 and Due by Dec. 14 at 5pm