

# Japanese Cultural History – Ancient and Medieval

Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. David Eason  
Associate Professor (Japanese History)

Class Meetings: Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> Period, 3:00-4:30pm,  
Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> Period, 3:00-4:30pm,

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:15-2:45, Tuesdays 1:15-2:45,  
Thursdays 1:15-2:45, and by appointment

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## Course Overview

This course offers a survey of Japanese cultural history from the time of the earliest known human settlements on the archipelago during the Paleolithic Era up until the end of the so-called “Age of the Country at War” circa 1600. We will focus on a number of major developments that took place during this extended period, with a particular emphasis on the creation of a centralized government and the gradual, uneven transition from courtier to warrior rule that accompanied and further complicated this shift. In addition, we will also analyze how these larger trends influenced some of the specific cultural practices developed and maintained by people who lived during these tumultuous times.

Just as importantly, although we will focus on Japan, in this course we will also explore the larger question of what it means to pursue the study of cultural history. To this end we will read and discuss a wide variety of translated primary sources that range from legal texts and letters to less official materials such as war tales and poetic travel diaries. Moreover, we will also spend substantial time viewing and analyzing visual materials that include maps, paintings, and picture scrolls.

All of these items will provide fodder for regular classroom discussions. As a result, through individual, group, and class activities we will engage in a process of active learning that goes far beyond simply memorizing the contents of a textbook.

## Course Goals

To acquire an ability to read and analyze materials produced in cultural contexts far removed from our own present-day concerns.

To recognize that the study of history is not simply the act of memorizing a series of seemingly obscure names, dates, and events, but that it rather entails careful and critical thinking about the kinds of evidence we use in order to make informed arguments about the past.

To gain an awareness of the various methods employed by historians for taking discrete, particular examples in order to make claims to truth and to advance arguments concerning larger historical trends and processes.

To be able to communicate clearly the ways in which different aspects of Japanese culture have developed, persisted, and in other cases changed over time.

To learn to know better than to ever again think that Japanese history is populated by an exclusive cast made up entirely of gorgeous geisha, nefarious ninja, and sword-waving samurai.

## Grading Guidelines

### Reading Response Assignments

(Responses required for 10 out of 12 readings, valued at 4% each) - 40%

Map Quiz - 5%

Midterm Exam - 15%

Final Exam - 25%

Class Activities - 15%

The following 100-point scale will be used for determining final grades in the class:

97-100=A+; 93-96=A; 90-92=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82=B-;

77-79=C+; 73-76=C; 70-72=C-; 67-69=D+; 63-66=D; 60-62=D-; 0-59=F.

Work not turned in will be counted as a zero (0). Absent an official, documented excuse, work cannot be turned in late nor made up.

Plagiarism or any other form of cheating will result in not only a zero (0) for that assignment, but an overall class score of zero (0) as well. Moreover, in accordance with official university policy, anyone caught cheating on the final exam will fail all of his or her courses for the term.

Class participation will, of course, require regular attendance and, in addition to asking questions, responding, and otherwise remaining generally attentive, may, depending on the day, also include such elements as group discussions, responses to questions asked to the class, and brief in-class writing activities.

There is no extra credit offered in this course. Please do not ask for any.

### Assigned Readings and Reading Response Assignments

Rather than use a single textbook, all assigned readings for this class can be found within a course reader that you will receive at the start of the semester as well as on online via our course webpage on Blackboard.

Reading responses should be submitted in the form of a printed copy at the start of class on the day they are due. They should be written in response to that day's assigned reading. Assignments submitted late will, as a rule, not be accepted. Reading responses should consist of two substantial but not interminably long paragraphs, each devoted to a particular purpose.

The first paragraph should aim to provide an overview of the main argument(s) made in the assigned reading and further include a summary of both the key points and accompanying evidence presented by the author in support of his or her conclusions.

The second paragraph provides you with an opportunity to offer your own detailed analysis of the assigned reading. Focus here on whether or not you found the author to be effective in presenting and proving his or her case based upon the structure and content of the argument. Feel free, moreover, to comment upon the style and clarity of the author's writing, as well as to mention whether the assigned reading generated any questions, problems, or lingering doubts in your mind that you wish to note.

### Class and Assignment Schedule

Meeting #	Date	Day	Course Topic	Assignments
1 回	9/3	Tues.	Introductions	
2 回	9/5	Thur.	Earliest Sources	* Response #1 Due *
3 回	9/10	Tues.	Ancient Inhabitants	
4 回	9/12	Thur.	Deities Big and Small	* Response #2 Due *
5 回	9/17	Tues.	Center and Periphery	* Map Quiz (In-class)
6 回	9/19	Thur.	Continental Philosophy	
7 回	9/24	Tues.	Capitals and Cosmology	* Response #3 Due *
8 回	9/26	Thur.	Ritual Considerations	
9 回	10/1	Tues.	The Language of Love	

1 0 回	10/3	Thur.	Life at Court	
1 1 回	10/8	Tues.	Public and Private Power	* Response #4 Due *
1 2 回	10/10	Thur.	Disaster and Response	
1 3 回	10/15	Tues.	Life in the Provinces	* Response #5 Due *
1 4 回	10/17	Thur.	Belated Reforms	
1 5 回	10/22	Tues.	<b>No Class</b>	
1 6 回	10/24	Thur.	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
1 7 回	10/29	Tues.	Facts Between Fictions	* Response #6 Due *
1 8 回	10/31	Thur.	<b>No Class</b>	
1 9 回	11/5	Tues.	Kamakura Courts	
2 0 回	11/7	Thur.	Popular Buddhism	* Response # 7 Due *
2 1 回	11/12	Tues.	The Mongol Invasions	
2 2 回	11/14	Thur.	Restoration and Rebellion	
2 3 回	11/19	Tues.	Violence in the 1300s	* Response #8 Due *
2 4 回	11/21	Thur.	Authority and the Arts	
2 5 回	11/26	Tues.	The Gods Must Be Lazy	
2 6 回	11/28	Thur.	The Ōnin War	* Response #9 Due *
2 7 回	12/3	Tues.	New Communal Norms	
2 8 回	12/5	Thur.	Artistic Exodus	* Response #10 Due *
2 9 回	12/10	Tues.	Trade and Piracy	* Response #11 Due *
3 0 回	12/12	Thur.	Steps Towards Re-Unification	* Response #12 Due *
12/17 ~ 12/21			<b>Final Exam Period</b>	