

Japanese Cultural History – Early Modern and Modern

Fall 2019

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

Class Meetings: Tuesday 5th Period, 4:40-6:10pm,
Thursday 5th Period, 4:40-6:10pm,

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

The most fundamental aim of this course is to provide an approachable and wide-ranging survey of early modern and modern Japanese history, a period spanning from the late sixteenth-century century to the present. In addition, however, this class is also designed to foster curiosity and compel deeper historical inquiry into the thorny question of how individuals relate to society. Accordingly, we will examine not only many of the major political, social, economic, and intellectual developments that have accompanied Japan's emergence as a world power, but also employ the methods of cultural history in order to investigate how people ranging from government leaders to average citizens have attempted to define and explain their various roles and responsibilities in early modern and modern Japan.

In order to accomplish such a task we will regularly examine a wide assortment of texts, ranging from law codes to newspaper accounts, and from public records produced by government officials to diary entries written by private citizens during times of peace as well as war. For this reason it will be essential that you read closely and carefully, paying attention to both the content of these texts while also considering carefully the specific historical contexts in which they were created and consumed.

Do this, and I am confident that from the combination of scholarly articles, translated primary sources, and extensive classroom discussions offered in this course you will come away from the experience with a greater understanding of both Japanese history as well as some of the many approaches available for the study of early modern and modern history more generally.

Course Goals

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 and analyzing them in order to advance claims concerning larger historical trends and processes.

To be able to think critically and express your views cogently on controversial historical topics that continue to resonate in the present day.

To be able to understand what scholars mean when they invoke the concept of “agency,” and to be able to discuss and evaluate how useful and relevant that concept is for understanding the actions of people both now and in the past.

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 Participation - 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 grade of zero (0) as well. Moreover, in accordance with university-wide regulations, anyone caught cheating on the final exam will fail all of their 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 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.	A History of Violence	* Response #1 Due *
3 回	9/10	Tues.	War, Politics, and Peace	
4 回	9/12	Thur.	Building a Bakufu	* Map Quiz (In-class)
5 回	9/17	Tues.	Center-Periphery Relations	* Response #2 Due *
6 回	9/19	Thur.	The Rural Ruled	
7 回	9/24	Tues.	On the Road	* Response #3 Due *
8 回	9/26	Thur.	Literacy and its Limits	
9 回	10/1	Tues.	Pop Culture Parodies	
1 0 回	10/3	Thur.	The Akō Incident	* Response #4 Due *

1 1 回	10/8	Tues.	Popular Unrest	* Response #5 Due *
1 2 回	10/10	Thur.	Shifting Paradigms	
1 3 回	10/15	Tues.	Black Ships	* Response #6 Due *
1 4 回	10/17	Thur.	“Men of Purpose”	
1 5 回	10/22	Tues.	No Class	
1 6 回	10/24	Thur.	Midterm Exam	
1 7 回	10/29	Tues.	Revolutionary Rhetoric	
1 8 回	10/31	Thur.	No Class	
1 9 回	11/5	Tues.	Imperial Subjects	* Response #7 Due *
2 0 回	11/7	Thur.	“Rich Country, Strong Army”	* Response #8 Due *
2 1 回	11/12	Tues.	Taishō Democracy	
2 2 回	11/14	Thur.	“Ero Guro Nonsense”	
2 3 回	11/19	Tues.	Clash of Civilizations	* Response #9 Due *
2 4 回	11/21	Thur.	World War Two, Part 1	
2 5 回	11/26	Tues.	World War Two, Part 2	
2 6 回	11/28	Thur.	Allied Occupation	* Response #10 Due *
2 7 回	12/4	Tues.	Postwar Consumers	
2 8 回	12/6	Thur.	High-Speed Economic Growth	* Response #11 Due *
2 9 回	12/11	Tues.	The Cost of Miracles	
3 0 回	12/13	Thur.	The Future History of Japan	* Response #12 Due *
			12/18 ~ 12/22	Final Exam Period