

Japanese Cultural History

Section 1

Ancient and Medieval

Instructor/Title	Dr. David Eason, Associate Professor
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Office Hours (Online)	Mondays and Thursdays 1:15-2:45pm, and by appointment
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【Course Outline / Description】

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 online activities and discussions. As a result, through activities pursued both individually and in groups, we will engage in a process of active learning that goes far beyond simply memorizing the contents of a staid and uninspiring textbook.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

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.

Section 3**【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】**

Day	Topic	Assignments (Reading Responses marked with * *)
1	Introductions	No Assigned Reading
2	Earliest Sources	Read – Barnes, pp. 3-15 and *Vincent, excerpts*
3	Ancient Inhabitants	Read – Aikens, pp. 55-65
4	Deities Big and Small	Read – *Borgen and Ury, pp. 65-81*
5	Center and Periphery	Read – Barnes, pp. 77-88
6	Continental Philosophy	Read – Batten, pp. 89-97
7	Capitals and Cosmology	Read – *Coaldrake, pp. 52-80*
8	Ritual Considerations	Read – Adolphson, pp. 135-145
9	The Language of Love	Read – Borgen and Sorensen, pp. 146-156
10	Life at Court	Read – Wallace, pp. 19-54
11	Public and Private Power	Read – *McCullough, pp. 335-355*
12	Disaster and Response	Read – Sato, pp. 91-108
13	Life in the Provinces	Read – *von Verschuer, pp. 157-166*
14	Belated Reforms	Read – Hurst, pp. 60-90
15	Midterm Examination	No Assigned Reading
16	Facts Between Fictions	Read – *Varley, pp. 78-115*
17	Kamakura Courts	Read – Goble, pp. 189-198
18	Popular Buddhism	Read – *Goodwin, pp. 107-141*
19	The Mongol Invasions	Read – Segal, pp. 203-212
20	Restoration and Rebellion	Read – Goble, pp. 213-223
21	Violence in the 1300s	Read – *Conlan, pp. 299-330*
22	Authority and the Arts	Read – Chance, pp. 254-265
23	Bakufu, Take Two	Read – Gay, pp. 49-65
24	The Ōnin War	Read – *Keene, pp. 15-29, 47-61*
25	New Communal Norms	Read – Nagahara, pp. 107-123
26	Artistic Exodus	Read – *McCormick, pp. 54-85*
27	Trade and Piracy	Read – *Shapinsky, pp. 273-313*
28	Varieties of Regional Rule	Read – Ike, pp. 53-70
29	Reunification, Part 1	Read – *Yamamura, pp. 327-372*
30	Reunification, Part 2	Read – *Pitelka, pp. 17-33*

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

In place of an assigned textbook, in this course we will use a variety of scholarly articles and book chapters intended to be read in advance of virtually every class meeting. Copies of these materials will be readily available beginning at the start of the semester in the form of viewable and downloadable files (pdf) accessible through our class 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 a minimum 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 claims.

This should then be followed by a second paragraph that 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.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Reading Response Assignments

(Responses for 10 out of 12 designated readings, valued at 4% each)	- 40%
Map Assignment	- 5%
Midterm Exam	- 15%
Final Exam	- 25%
Online 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.

Section 5

【Additional Information】

The above schedule is subject to change depending upon the days of the week on which our class is scheduled and how these scheduled meetings intersect with the university's plans for observing holidays during the Fall 2020 semester. In theory there will be 30 class meetings, but past experience has proven that, due to holidays, in some semesters the actual number of meetings is reduced to 29, in which case the materials currently listed will be condensed in some way on the final version of this semester's class schedule.