

# Japanese Cultural History – Early Modern and Modern

Fall 2022

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

Class Meetings: Monday 5<sup>th</sup> Period, 4:40-6:10pm  
Location – To be announced

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> Period, 9:00-10:30am  
Location – To be announced

Office Hours: Mondays 1:15-2:45pm, Wednesdays 4:40-6:10pm,  
as well as by appointment  
(either in person or online through Zoom –  
Meeting ID: 696 567 3108 )

Email Address: [davidaeason@gmail.com](mailto:davidaeason@gmail.com)

## 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 Assignment - 5%

First Writing Assignment - 15%

Second Writing Assignment - 25%

Class Activities and Discussion - 25%

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 rely on a single textbook, assigned readings for this class will be drawn from a variety of different sources, copies of which will be made available to you online through our course webpage on Blackboard.

Reading responses should be submitted through Blackboard by or before 8am on the day they are listed as due in our class schedule. They should be written in response to the assigned reading for that day. 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/her/their 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 their 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	8/29	Mon.	Introductions	
2 回	8/31	Wed.	A History of Violence	* Response #1 Due *
3 回	9/5	Mon.	War, Politics, and Peace	
4 回	9/7	Wed.	Building a Bakufu	
5 回	9/12	Mon.	Center-Periphery Relations	* Response #2 Due *
6 回	9/14	Wed.	Village Life	* Map Assignment Due *
7 回	9/19	Mon.	On the Road	* Response #3 Due *
8 回	9/21	Wed.	Commerce and Culture	
9 回	9/26	Mon.	The Akō Incident	* Response #4 Due *

1 0 回	9/28	Wed.	Literacy and Its Limits	
1 1 回	10/3	Mon.	Protest to What End?	* Response #5 Due *
1 2 回	10/5	Wed.	Shifting Social Norms	
1 3 回	10/10	Mon.	Black Ships	
1 4 回	10/12	Wed.	Restoration vs. Revolution	<b>** 1st Assignment **</b>
1 5 回	10/17	Mon.	The Civilizing Process	* Response #6 Due *
1 6 回	10/19	Wed.	Modern Subjects	
1 7 回	10/24	Mon.	“Rich Country, Strong Army”	* Response # 7 Due *
1 8 回	10/26	Wed.	Party Politics	
	10/31	Mon.	<b>No Class</b>	
1 9 回	11/2	Wed.	“Ero Guro Nonsense”	
2 0 回	11/7	Mon.	Agrarian Unrest	
2 1 回	11/9	Wed.	Puppet State	* Response #8 Due *
2 2 回	11/14	Mon.	Clash of Civilizations?	* Response #9 Due *
2 3 回	11/16	Wed.	World War Two, Part 1	
2 4 回	11/21	Mon.	World War Two, Part 2	
2 5 回	11/23	Wed.	Allied Occupation	* Response #10 Due *
2 6 回	11/28	Mon.	Postwar Consumerism	* Response #11 Due *
2 7 回	11/30	Wed.	High-Speed Economic Growth	
2 8 回	12/5	Mon.	The Cost of Miracles	
2 9 回	12/7	Wed.	An Uncertain Environment	* Response #12 Due *
3 0 回	12/12	Mon.	The Future History of Japan	
12/13 ~ 12/17			<b>Final Exam Period</b>	<b>** 2nd Assignment **</b>