

Samurai Warriors – A History of Sixteenth-Century Japan

Spring 2023

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

Class Meetings: Monday 5th Period, 4:40-6:10pm
Location – Building 3, Room #3405

Wednesday 5th Period, 4:40-6:10pm
Location – Building 3, Room #3405

Office Hours: 3rd Period on Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:15-2:45pm,
as well as by appointment
(either in person or online through Zoom –
Meeting ID: 696 567 3108)

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Course Overview

Perhaps few epochs in Japanese history are as famous as the sixteenth century. Commonly called "sengoku jidai," or the period of warring states, this era has arguably received more than its fair share of attention thanks to its frequent portrayal across a wide assortment of popular media including historical novels, television shows, movies, manga, anime, and games. For many people there would thus appear to be a certain undeniable allure to stories associated with this age of upheaval in which aggressive samurai leaders and their equally ambitious followers together came to occupy center stage.

Few are likely to be surprised, then, to encounter accounts of armed conflict, and military campaigns of increasingly greater scope and complexity were certainly one key hallmark of the time. Correspondingly, in this class we will similarly not shy away from discussions of historical battles. But beyond an examination of the evolving tactics and strategies employed in warfare, we will also concern ourselves with a broader host of political, social, cultural, and economic developments essential for both understanding the root causes of such struggles and in explaining the processes through which a broader, lasting peace was ultimately achieved. To do so further will entail examining a large number of primary sources produced during the period as well as reviewing and discussing the work of more recent scholars, ultimately culminating in your own exploration of sixteenth-century Japanese history in the form of a multistage research project proposal produced by semester's end.

Course Goals

To be able to interpret and analyze primary sources, be they stories, letters, laws, paintings, or maps created during the historical time period under study.

To be able to recognize, evaluate, and respond to the arguments made by historians in published secondary scholarship and be able, moreover, to critically consider the strengths and weaknesses of these researchers' respective approaches to explaining the past.

To be able to demonstrate the organizational and time-management skills necessary to successfully formulate and begin a research project, including selecting an appropriate topic, locating and evaluating possible sources, reporting on progress, and ultimately producing a proposed course of research.

To be able to comprehend and clearly explain the issues involved in the complicated matter of historical agency - or how individuals relate to their society and the extent to which they exercised control over their lives given conditions during the period in which they lived.

Grading Guidelines

Class Participation		- 20%
Homework Assignments (8 in total)		- 30%
Research Paper Proposal		
- Topic	(Due on 3/27)	- 5%
- Annotated Bibliography	(Due on 4/24)	- 10%
- In-class Presentations	(5/8-5/17)	- 10%
- Finalized Proposal	(Due on day of final exam)	- 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, and in-class writing activities.

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

Assigned Readings and Homework Assignments

Rather than use a single textbook, all assigned readings for this class will be made available online via our course webpage on Blackboard.

There are some days on which, in addition to assigned readings, brief, written homework assignments will also be due. In such cases instructions for the assignment will be made available on Blackboard.

Class Meeting and Assignment Schedule

Meeting #	Date	Day	Course Topic	Assignments Due
1 回	1/25	Wed.	Introductions	
2 回	1/30	Mon.	Welcome to the Warring States	Homework #1
3 回	2/1	Wed.	Beginning at the End	
4 回	2/6	Mon.	A Military Revolution?	Homework #2
5 回	2/8	Wed.	Unparalleled Success	
6 回	2/13	Mon.	Enemies and Allies	Homework #3
7 回	2/15	Wed.	“The Demon King”	
8 回	2/20	Mon.	Status and Rank	
9 回	2/22	Wed.	Religious Objectors	Homework #4
1 0 回	2/27	Mon.	Gunning for Victory	
1 1 回	3/1	Wed.	Rough Waters	
1 2 回	3/6	Mon.	Risks and Rewards	
1 3 回	3/8	Wed.	Regional Disparities	Homework #5

Meeting #	Date	Day	Course Topic	Assignments Due
1 4回	3/13	Mon.	Impressing the Neighbors [Online Class]	
1 5回	3/15	Wed.	Daimyo and their followers [Online Class]	
	3/20	Mon.	No Class	
	3/22	Wed.	No Class	
1 6回	3/27	Mon.	Family Ties	Research Topic
1 7回	3/29	Wed.	Gender and Violence	Homework #6
1 8回	4/3	Mon.	Demographic Shifts	Homework #7
1 9回	4/5	Wed.	The Rule of Law	
2 0回	4/10	Mon.	At the Crossroads of History	
2 1回	4/12	Wed.	Foundational Myths	Homework #8
2 2回	4/17	Mon.	Lords Without Land	
2 3回	4/19	Wed.	Social Distinctions	
2 4回	4/24	Mon.	Urban Order	Annotated Bibliography
2 5回	4/26	Wed.	Encyclopedic Knowledge	
2 6回	5/1	Mon.	Training for Peace	
	5/3	Wed.	No Class	
2 7回	5/8	Mon.	Discipline and Punishment	Presentations
2 8回	5/10	Wed.	Predecessors and Precedent	“
2 9回	5/15	Mon.	Food for Thought	“
3 0回	5/17	Wed.	New Approaches to the Past	“
5/22 ~ 5/26			Final Exam Period	Research Paper Proposal Due