This course introduces you to the history of Japan, from the time when a land bridge connected the Japanese isles to the Asian mainland to the dawn of the modern era. Topics will include the introduction of Buddhism, writing, and tea from Asia, the establishment of the Medieval culture described in The Tale of Genji, the rise of warrior rule, and the lives of the women, samurai, peasants, city dwellers, and outcasts who lived, worked, played, and sometimes revolted in Medieval and Early Modern Japan. It will draw extensively on translated primary sources and on visual sources from Oberlin’s collection and online. Enrollment Limit: 40.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**
Required texts have been ordered in paperback at the Oberlin Bookstore (basement) as well as placed on reserve at Mudd Library.


All other readings are available on Blackboard.

**RECOMMENDED TEXT**

**ESSAYS**
Letter graded work will consist of three (3) take-home essays. Students will be able to choose one essay topic from a list of possible topics. The topics for each essay will be passed out one week in advance and the essays will be due on Monday October 10, Monday November 14, and Monday December 12. Essays should draw on the material discussed in lecture and on the readings, but they will also require you to think through the material and elaborate a clear thesis. The essays should not include any outside materials and are limited to a maximum of five pages (double spaced).
Essays are due on (or before) the due date noted in the syllabus. No extensions will be granted. Late essays will be marked down 2/3 of a grade for the first day and 1/3 of a grade for every day thereafter. One week after the due date they will no longer be accepted.

**DISCUSSION POINTS**
Students are required to post four (4) thoughtful one paragraph discussion points or questions about the readings for the week on the online discussion board by Sunday, 9 pm. A sign-up sheet is posted online. The discussion points will be evaluated as √+, √, √- or 0. They will be discussed in class but will not be returned to individual students. You can ask the instructor for comments and/or for the evaluation of discussion points during office hours.

Evaluations of the discussion points will be used to determine borderline grades. A student whose grade hovers between a B+ and a B, for example, but who’s discussion points were a √+ will receive a B+.

Lectures are an integral part of the course. All students are expected to attend lectures, complete the readings, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

**FILM SCREENINGS**
Two films will be shown during the course of the semester in King 337. The first, “Ran” by Director Kurosawa Akira will be screened on Tuesday October 12 at 7pm. The second film, “Twilight Samurai” (Tasogare Seibei) by Director Yamada Yōji will be screened on Tuesday November 30 at 7pm. Films will be discussed during lecture in conjunction with the readings for the week.

**HONOR CODE**
All students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments.

**WRITING ASSISTANCE**
Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Center in Mudd Library where tutors from the Writing Associates Program can provide strategies for improving writing skills.

**OFFICE HOURS**
Mondays and Wednesdays 3:45-4:45 pm or by appointment.
Students are encouraged to come see the instructor with questions about any aspect of the course.
LECTURE SCHEDULE

I. PRE-MODERN JAPAN

Week 1: Origins
Sep. 7 (W) Introduction: Why study Japanese history?
Sep. 9 (F) Early Peoples, Myths, and Technologies

Secondary Sources

Primary sources
“History of the Kingdom of Wei,” 6-8 (*SJT*).
“The Earliest Japanese Chronicles,” 13-16 (*SJT*).
“Legends concerning Shintō Deities;” 19-23 (*SJT*).
“Descent of the Divine Grandson with the Three Imperial Regalia,” 27-28 (*SJT*).

Week 2: The Early Japanese State
Sept. 12 (M) Shinto and the Rise of the Yamato Rulers
Sept. 14 (W) Buddhism and the State
Sept. 16 (M) The Writing System

Secondary Sources
Mason & Caiger, 25-63.

Primary sources
“The Reign of Suiko and Rule of Shōtoku,” pp 46-54 (*SJT*).
“The Reform Era;” “Inauguration of the Great Reform Era,” 75-84 (*SJT*).
“Buddhism and the State in Nara Japan,” 114-120 (*SJT*).

Week 3: The Classical Age
Sept. 19 (M) Courtier Rulership in the Heian Period (794-1185)
Sept. 21 (W) Heian Refinements and Religions
Sept. 23 (F) *The Tale of Genji* and Heian Literature

Secondary Source
Mason & Caiger, 64-117.

Primary sources
“Saichō: Vow of the Uninterrupted Study of the Lotus Sutra,” 140 (*SJT*).
“Saichō: Explaining the Precepts,” 141-142 (*SJT*).
“Regulations for Students of the Mountain School in Six Articles I,” 145-146 (*SJT*).
“Murasaki Shikibu: On the Art of Fiction,” 201-203 (*SJT*).


**Week 4: The Rise of the Warrior Class**

Sept. 26 (M) The Rise of the Warrior Class

Sept. 28 (W) Warrior Rulership and Kamakura Culture

Sept. 30 (F) Civil War

**Secondary Source**

Mason & Caiger, 121-143.

**Primary sources**

*Tales of Times Now Past,* 93-101; 173-77; 184-186 (Blackboard).


“The Jōei Code,” 415-417 (*SJT*).

“The Kenmu Code,” 418-420 (*SJT*).

**Week 5: Medieval Cultures**

Oct. 3 (M) The Southern Barbarians

Oct. 5 (W) The Culture of War

Oct. 7 (F) The Period of Warring States

**Secondary Source**

Mason & Caiger, 144-170.

**Primary sources**

“Medieval Uses of the Past,” 250-257 (*SJT*).

“The Yūki House Code,” 423-425 (*SJT*).

“Genshin: The Essentials of Salvation;” 217-222 (*SJT*).


“Dōgen: How to Practice Buddhism,” 319-328 (*SJT*).


**First Essay due at the beginning of class on Monday October 10.**

**Week 6: From War to Unification**

Oct. 10 (M) The Unifiers

Oct. 12 (W) Visit to Special Collections

Oct. 14 (F) Unification

*For visit to Special collections, please convene at 1:30 pm at Special Collections on the 4th floor of Mudd Library.*
**Reminder:** Screening of “Ran” by Kurosawa Akira at 7pm on Tuesday, Oct. 12.

**Secondary Source**

**Primary sources**
“Toyotomi Hideyoshi: Domestic Policies,” “The Korean War: Letter to the King of Korea,” 458-467 (*SJT*).

**II. EARLY MODERN JAPAN**

**Week 7: The Tokugawa Polity: The Warriors**
Oct. 17 (M) Shoguns and Warriors
Oct. 19 (W) Case Study: The Akō Vendetta
Oct. 21* (F) Museum Visit

*Please convene at 1:30 pm at the Allen Memorial Museum.*

**Secondary Sources**

**Primary sources**
“Code for the Warrior Households,” 12-14 (Blackboard).
“Code for the Imperial Court and Court Nobility,” 14-18 (Blackboard).

**Fall Recess**

**Week 8: The Tokugawa Polity and its Discontents**
Oct. 31 (F) Case Study: Katsu Kokichi
Nov. 2 (M) Villagers, City Dwellers, and Outcasts
Nov. 4 (W) Deconstructing the Samurai

**Secondary Sources**
Gordon, 20-33 (Blackboard).
Primary Sources

**Week 9: The Tokugawa Polity in Mythology and Art**
Nov. 7 (M) “A Tale of a Dream from the Fox Woman Plain”  
Nov. 9 (W) Women  
Nov. 11 (F) “Sakoku”

Secondary Sources

Primary source

**Second Essay due at the beginning of class on Monday November 14.**

**Week 10: A Closed Country? Foreign Relations in Tokugawa Japan**
Nov. 14 (M) The Dutch on Dejima  
Nov. 16 (W) Japanese views of Asia  
Nov. 18* (F) Museum Visit

*Please convene at 1:30 pm at the Allen Memorial Museum.

Secondary Sources
Gordon, 34-45 (Blackboard).  
Toby, Ronald. *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, 1-22 (Blackboard).  

Primary sources
“Aizawa Seishisai: Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarian;” “New Theses” 520-529 (Blackboard).  
“Sakuma Shōzan: Eastern Ethics and Western Science,” 530-540 (Blackboard).  

**Week 11: Black Ships and Red Beards**
Nov. 21 (M) Troubles from Within and Without  
Nov. 23 (W) The Black Ships

Secondary Sources
Gordon, 46-59 (Blackboard).
Thanksgiving Recess

Week 12: Abandoning the Old Building the New
Nov. 28 (M) The Black Ships in Multiple Perspectives
Nov. 30* (W) From Edo to Tokyo
Dec. 2 (F) The New Era and the Reinvention of Edo

*Reminder: Screening of “Twilight Samurai” at 7pm on Tuesday Nov. 30.

Secondary Source

Primary sources

Week 13: The Restoration from Multiple Perspectives
Dec. 5 (M) The Restoration and its Winners
Dec. 7 (W) Museum Visit
Dec. 9 (F) The Restoration in the Eyes of its Losers

Primary sources
Shiba Gorō, Remembering Aizu. Entire.

Third Essay due at the beginning of class on Monday December 12.

Week 14: Narrating the Tokugawa Period
Dec. 12 (M) Japan’s Premodern and Early Modern Period in Contemporary Perspective

Secondary Source
Gordon, preface and introduction (Blackboard).