This course examines the origins of Japanese civilization and surveys the classical, medieval, and early modern periods. From the emergence of a court-centered state through the rise and fall of a warrior-dominated society, Japan’s premodern history is explored through a focus on political, social, cultural, and intellectual developments. Early interactions with Asia and the West will be considered as a means of questioning the “opening” of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century. Enrollment Limit: 40.

Students are encouraged to keep in mind the following goals for maximizing learning throughout the semester:

- Looking for patterns and themes in history. Students are encouraged to draw connections between major events and ideas in Japan’s history and those encountered in other history courses.
- Thinking about how historians practice their craft. In particular, students will learn to read and interpret a variety of primary sources as a way of understanding the creation of multiple perspectives on the past.
- Learning how to think critically about the past. When reading assigned material, students are encouraged to develop their “historical thinking” by jotting down questions about processes, patterns, and trends in the historical record. Good questions have multiple answers and will help students frame a larger context for any given reading.
- Understanding how history-writing is shaped by contemporary concerns.
- Improving expository writing; learning to posit an argument and develop it in a clear and logical progression.
- Polishing the verbal articulation of ideas before an audience of one’s peers.

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


**Recommended text:**


All other readings are available on Blackboard.
ASSESSMENT:
The course grade will be based on the following:

• Mid-term (hour) exam:  20%
• Short papers: 20% each
• Final exam:  25%
• Attendance/Participation:  15%

All grading is based on the following scale: A+ 100-97; A 96-94; A- 93-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 69-65. A grade below 65 is a failing grade.

Note: Failure to submit any single written assignment for the class will result in a failing final grade and no credit will be granted.

EXPECTATIONS:

• Lectures are an integral part of the course, and attendance is mandatory. Absences will be recorded. Problematic attendance may result in a failing grade for the course. (In the case of personal or family emergency, please contact me to make arrangements for completing missed work.)
• Students are expected to be ready to begin promptly at 11am and be well-prepared for every class meeting. See also “Reading Assignments” and “Friday Discussion Sections” below.
  o Always bring assigned readings to class.
  o Be responsible for both your own and your fellow students’ learning. Together, you can ensure that all class time is spent in a productive discussion of ideas—an endeavor dependent on the timely and thorough completion of all readings by all.
  o No one person should dominate discussion, nor should anyone be totally absent from contributing to class discussion. If you have concerns, please come and see me.
• Honor Code: Students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments, concluding each with the handwritten pledge: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment.” Infractions of the Honor Code will be referred to the College Honor Committee. Please come and see me with any questions regarding the citation of sources and proper attribution of information. For more information on the Oberlin Honor Code, please refer to the “Student Policies” section of the Oberlin College website.
  *Collaboration with Classmates: You are encouraged to study together with classmates for all assignments. However, all written work must be yours and yours alone. If you have any questions about what constitutes allowable collaboration, please come and see me.
ASSIGNMENTS:
Exams: The Midterm Examination, covering the lectures and all assigned readings to date will be given in class on Monday, Oct. 6. The Final Examination is scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 9-11am.

Papers: Students will write two essays (1,400 words each), due in class on Friday, Nov. 14, and Monday, Dec. 8.

Reading Assignments: Students are asked to complete the assigned reading by Monday for each week listed (except for week 1 when the reading must be completed by Friday.) There are two basic types of readings in the course. The first are those from Mason and Caiger, *A History of Japan*. These readings are useful for reinforcing the chronological narrative presented in lecture. The second are literary and other primary source texts. Both types of readings require careful attention to detail and presentation, though strategies for reading both differ. Discussions of reading strategies for all types of readings will be discussed in the first weeks of class.

Friday Discussion Sections: At the start of the semester, students will be divided into three groups, and members of each group will be “on-call” during the Friday discussion period every third week. What this means is that members of the on-call group will be responsible for answering any and all questions on the reading I choose to put to them. Competent, well-informed answers will count positively towards the student’s course participation grade, while the obverse will also hold true. (Main point: on your on-call week, come to class with a good understanding of the main points covered in the week’s readings.) Students “not on-call” on a given Friday must still do all of the week’s readings and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. One privilege of on-call students is that they can pose a question to any non on-call students at any time. Come prepared for a lively discussion section every Friday!

Note: If it appears that even a small minority of students are not completing weekly reading assignments in preparation for the Friday discussion period, I reserve the right to give pop quizzes.

Visual and Material Cultures Assignment: Students will complete one writing assignment of 500 words that will focus on an object from visual culture and be due on Friday, Nov. 21. Details to be explained in class.

Assignments are due on (or before) the due date noted in the syllabus. Only one extension will be granted per semester and must be requested during office hours at least 2 days before the due date of the paper. (Note: Requests for extensions may not be granted in all cases. Extensions will never be granted for reasons of workload or insufficient advance planning.) Late assignments will be reduced by one grade step per day. A paper due on Friday, November 14 which is turned in on Saturday, November 15, for example, will get a “B-” rather than the “B” it merited. A “B” paper turned in on Monday, November 17 will earn a “C+”, etc.
In-Class Contributions: In certain weeks, students will be asked to present a map or image related to the week’s reading, to focus in groups on specific passages from a given reading, and/or to perform a short writing exercise in class. All such exercises will presume timely completion of that week’s readings, so come prepared!

CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

Film Screenings: Two films will be shown during the course of the semester in Wilder 101. The first, “Ran” by Director Kurosawa Akira will be screened on Thursday, September 25 at 7pm. The second film, “Gohatto” by Director Ōshima Nagisa will be screened on Tuesday, December 2 at 7pm. Films will be discussed during lecture in conjunction with the week’s readings.

Thinking about History with Art: Examination of works of art from Oberlin’s Allen Memorial Art Museum will form an integral part of the course curriculum. Students will visit the museum during class hours in weeks four/five and ten for discussion of the week’s themes in the context of material objects. Students will also be given an opportunity to write one of the two required papers on a topic related to objects from the museum’s collection.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES/INFO:

Writing Assistance: Students are encouraged to use the Drop-In Writing Center located in Mudd 101A (the Academic Commons) as well as other services offered by Oberlin’s Writing Associates Program.

Accommodations for Disabilities: Students requiring accommodation for a disability must present a note from Jane Boomer (Director, Office of Disability Services, Peters Hall G-27, Jane.Boomer@oberlin.edu; Tel. 440-775-5588) by Wed. Sept. 10. The note should include a detailed description of the type of accommodation required.

Personal Pronouns: Students with preferences in this regard should e-mail me at the start of the semester.

Office Hours: Students are encouraged to come see me with questions about any aspect of the course:
Wed. 4 – 5:30pm and Fri. 12noon – 1:30pm
Rice Hall, Room 308
LECTURE SCHEDULE:

I. PRE-MODERN TRADITIONS

Week 1: Origins
Sept. 3 (W) Introduction and Maps
Sept. 5 (F) Earliest Times: 11,000 to 300 B.C.E.
Peopling the Archipelago

Readings:
Hall, John W., *Japan from Prehistory to Modern Times*, 1-23.

Primary documents: *Sources of Japanese Tradition (SJT)*
“History of the Kingdom of Wei,” pp. 6-8.

Week 2: The Early Japanese State
Sept. 8 (M) Conquering the Islands: The Rise of the Yamato Kings
Sept. 10* (W) The Asuka Enlightenment
Sept. 12 (F) Discussion

Readings:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 25-63.

Primary documents: *SJT*

*On Wednesday, Sept. 10, there will be a map quiz at the beginning of class.*

Week 3: The Classical Age
Sept. 15 (M) Courtier Rulership in the Heian Period (794-1185)
Sept. 17 (W) Heian Refinements and Religions
Sept. 19 (F) *The Tale of Genji* and the “Rule of Taste”

Reading:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 64-117.

Primary documents: *SJT*
“Murasaki Shikibu: On the Art of Fiction,” pp. 201-03.

[Blackboard]:

**Week 4: The Rise of the Warrior Class**
Sept. 22 (M)  The Rise of the Warrior Class
*Sept. 24 (W)  The Medieval Bakufu: Kamakura and Ashikaga
**Sept. 26 (F)  Group #1 at Allen Memorial Museum

Readings:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 121-57
Mason, Penelope. History of Japanese Art, pp. 147-48; 174-203; 211-14.

*Reminder: Screening of “Ran” by Kurosawa Akira at 7pm on Thursday, Sept. 25.

**Important: AMAM Museum Visit Information:
**Students should convene at the museum at 1:30pm on their scheduled day.

**Week 5: Medieval Cultures**
Sept. 29 (M)  Group #2 at Allen Memorial Museum
Oct. 1 (W)  Everyday Life in Medieval Japan
Oct. 3 (F)  Discussion; Midterm Review

Primary documents: SJT

**Week 6: Medieval Period in the Arts**
Oct. 6 (M)  In-Class Midterm
Oct. 8 (W)  Religion
Oct. 10 (F)  The Culture of War and the Southern Barbarians

Reading:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 158-70.

Primary documents: SJT
“Genshin: The Essentials of Salvation;” pp. 217-222;
“Eisai: Propagation of Zen for the Protection of the State;” pp. 311-17;

**Week 7: Towards Unification**

Oct. 13 (M) The Mature Daimyo
Oct. 15 (W) The Unifiers
Oct. 17 (F) Discussion

Reading:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 173-89.

Primary documents: *SJT*:

**Fall Recess**

**II. EARLY MODERN JAPAN**

**Week 8: The Pax Tokugawa**

Oct. 27 (M) Political Unification
Oct. 29 (W) The Tokugawa Polity
Oct. 31 (F) The Shoguns

Readings:


Primary documents: *SJT*, Vol. 2 [Blackboard]:
“Code for the Warrior Households,” pp. 12-4;
“Code for the Imperial Court and Court Nobility,” pp. 14-8.
“Anecdotes concerning Yamazaki Ansai,” pp. 82-3.
Week 9: Protests and Uprisings

Nov. 3 (M) Revolt
Nov. 5 (W) Case Studies
Nov. 7 (F) “A Tale of a Dream from the Fox Woman Plain.”

Readings:
Gordon, MHJ, Ch. 2 (pp. 22-34).


Primary document:

Week 10: Thinking about Tokugawa-era Women with Art

Nov. 10 (M) Section #1: Allen Art Museum Visit
Nov. 12 (W) Section #2: Allen Art Museum Visit
Nov. 14 (F) Paper #1 Due

Readings:

Primary documents:


Week 11: A Closed Country? Foreign Relations in Tokugawa Japan

Nov. 17 (M) “Sakoku”
Nov. 19 (W) “Dutch Learning”
*Nov. 21 (F) Case Study: Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716)

Readings:

Primary document:

*Visual and Material Cultures Assignment due in class on Friday, Nov. 21.
Week 12: Black Ships and Red Beards
Nov. 24 (M) Troubles Within and Without
Nov. 26 (W) Perry’s Arrival / Discussion of Readings
Nov. 28 (F) No Class: Happy Thanksgiving!

Readings:
Gordon, MHJ, Ch. 4 (pp. 47-59).


Primary documents: SJT, Vol. 2 [Blackboard]:
“Aizawa Seishisai: Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarian;” “New Theses” pp. 520-29;

Thanksgiving Recess

Week 13: Narrating the Restoration
**Dec. 1 (M) Who Gets to Tell the Story of Tokugawa Japan?
Dec. 3 (W) Imperial Loyalism
Dec. 5 (F) Collapse of the Bakufu

**Reminder: Screening of “Gohatto” at 7pm on Tuesday, December 2.

Primary documents: SJT, Vol. 2 [Blackboard]

Week 14: From Tokugawa to Meiji
Dec. 8* (M) Paper #2 Due. Commoner Political Consciousness in the Bakumatsu Period?
Dec. 10 (W) Abandoning the Old; Building the New

*Second papers are due in-class on Monday, Dec. 8.

Primary documents: SJT, Vol. 2 [Blackboard]

Final Examination: Wed., December 17, 9-11am.