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: 50.

**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.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY:**

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings for the course. Additionally, assessment is based on four written assignments: two short (4-6 page) papers; a midterm examination, and a final examination.

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 **before the due date of the paper.** (Note: Requests for extensions may not be granted in all cases.) Late assignments will be reduced by one grade step per day. A paper due on Monday, November 12 which is turned in on November 13, for example, will get a “B-” rather than the “B” it merited. A “B” paper turned in on November 14 will earn a “C+”, etc.
The course grade will be based on the following:

- Mid-term (hour) exam: 20%
- Short papers: 20% each
- Final exam: 25%
- Class participation: 15%

**EXAMS:** The Midterm Examination, covering the lectures and all assigned readings to date will be administered on **Monday, Oct. 15.** The Final Examination is scheduled for **Wednesday, Dec. 19 from 7-9pm.**

**PAPERS:** Students will write two 4-6 page essays, due at **4 PM on Monday, Nov. 12, and Monday, Dec. 10.**

**ATTENDANCE:**
Lectures are an integral part of the course, and **attendance is mandatory.** Students are required to complete the assigned readings and come prepared to discuss the readings. **On Fridays, each student is required to bring one question (drawn from the readings) to class for discussion.**

**FILM SCREENINGS:** Two films will be shown during the course of the semester. The first, “**Ran**” by Director Kurosawa Akira will be screened on **Tuesday, October 2 at 7pm** (location: TBA). The second film, “**Twilight Samurai**” (**Tasogare Seibei**) by Director Yamada Yôji will be screened on **Tuesday, December 4 at 7pm** (location: TBA). The films will also be available on library reserve to view on video if you cannot make the screenings. Films will be discussed during lecture in conjunction with the readings for the week.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:**
Allen Memorial Art Museum:
On **Wednesday, October 10** and **Friday, October 12,** students will meet at the Allen Art Museum for a special tour of the museum’s Ainsworth Collection of Japanese prints. The class will be split into two groups (one group per museum session). See details below under Week 6.

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

**Writing Assistance:** Students are encouraged to avail of the writing skills workshops offered by the staff of Student Academic Services (SAS) located in Peters 118.

**OFFICE HOURS:**
Students are encouraged to come see the instructor with questions about any aspect of the course:
**Tuesday 3 – 4:30 and Friday 2:30 – 4pm**
Rice Hall, Room 308
Phone: 5-6708
E-mail: Emer.O’Dwyer@oberlin.edu
LECTURE SCHEDULE:

I. PRE-MODERN TRADITIONS

Week 1: Origins
Sept. 5 (W) Introduction, Maps, and Earliest Times
Sept. 7 (F) Peopling the Archipelago

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

Week 2: The Early Japanese State
Sept. 10* (M) Conquering the Islands: Early State Formation
Sept. 12 (W) The Japanese Imperial State
Sept. 14 (F) Nara Period Culture: The Many *sho*; Buddhist Art and Architecture

Readings: Mason & Caiger, pp. 25-63.
*Sources of Japanese Tradition*, pp. 3-8; 13-31; 100-15; 114-120.

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

Week 3: The Classical Age
Sept. 17 (M) Courtier Rulership in the Heian Age (794-1185)
Sept. 19 (W) Heian Refinements and Religions
Sept. 21 (F) *The Tale of Genji* and Heian Literature

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

Primary documents:

Week 4: The Rise of the Warrior Class
Sept. 24 (M) The Rise of the Warrior Class
Sept. 26 (W) Warrior Rulership
Sept. 28 (F) Civil War
Readings:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 121-143, 158-170.

Primary documents:
*Tales of Times Now Past, 93-101; 173-77; 184-86.

**Week 5: Medieval Cultures**
Oct. 1 (M)  Everyday Life in Medieval Japan
Oct. 3 (W)  The Culture of War and the Southern Barbarians
Oct. 5 (F)  Religion

Readings:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 144-89.
*Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 211-228, 399-412, 420-432.
**Reminder: Screening of “Ran” by Kurosawa Akira at 7pm on Tuesday, October 2.**

**Week 6: Medieval Art and Literature**
Oct. 8 (M)  The Arts and Literature
Oct. 10 (W)  Section #1: Allen Art Museum Visit*
Oct. 12 (F)  Section #2: Allen Art Museum Visit*

*Important: AMAM Museum Visit Information:*
*Students will be assigned to one of two groups for the museum visit. The group not visiting the museum on a given day will meet as usual in King 337 to review for the midterm on Monday, October 15.**
**Students should convene at the museum at 1:30pm on their scheduled day.

Readings:
Mason, Penelope. *History of Japanese Art*, pp. 147-148; 174-201; 211-12.

**II. EARLY MODERN JAPAN**

**Week 7: The Pax Tokugawa**
Oct. 15 (M)  In-Class Midterm
Oct. 17 (W)  Oda Nobunaga and Political Unification
Oct. 19 (F)  The Tokugawa Polity

Readings:

Fall Recess

Week 8: Tokugawa Society  
Oct. 29 (M) City Life and Commerce in Tokugawa Japan  
Oct. 31 (W) Punishment  
Nov. 2 (F) Religion, Education, and Recreation

Primary document:  

Reading:  

Week 9: Women in the Tokugawa Period  
Nov. 5 (M) Profile and Prospects  
Nov. 7 (W) Case Studies  
Nov. 9 (F) The Sex Trade

Primary documents:  

Readings:  

Week 10: Protests and Uprisings  
Nov. 12* (M) Symptoms  
Nov. 14 (W) Revolt!  
Nov. 16 (F) Case Studies: Peasants in Protest

*First papers are due by 4pm on Monday, Nov. 12.
Primary document:

Readings:

Week 11: A Closed Country? Foreign Relations in Tokugawa Japan
Nov. 19 (M) “Sakoku:” A Persisting Myth
Nov. 21 (W) The Dutch on Dejima
Nov. 23 (F) Case Study: Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716)

Primary document:

Readings:

Week 12: Black Ships and Red Beards
Nov. 26 (M) 1850s Troubles
Nov. 28 (W) Perry’s Arrival

Readings:
Smith, Thomas C. “Japan’s Aristocratic Revolution,” in T.C. Smith, Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization, 1750-1920, pp. 133-47. (Online in OBIS)

Thanksgiving Recess

Week 13: Narrating the Restoration
Dec. 3 (M) Who Speaks for Tokugawa Japan?
Dec. 5 (W) How to Narrate the Restoration
Dec. 7 (F) The Restoration and Modern Japan

**Reminder: Screening of “Twilight Samurai” (Tasogare Seibei) at 7pm on Tuesday, December 4.
Reading:

**Week 14: Assessing the Tokugawa Period**
Dec. 10* (M) Abandoning the Old, Building the New
Dec. 12 (W) Japan’s Premodern and Early Modern Period in Contemporary Perspective

*Second papers are due by 4pm on Monday, Dec. 10.

Reading: