

Fall 2016

HIST 336: History of Japan, 1550-1945 The Warrior Tradition in Japan

VKC109, MW 8:30-9:50 AM

Jamyung Choi, SOS 263

Office Hours: 10 AM to 1 PM, Wednesday, or by appointment

jamyungc@usc.edu

This course explores one of the most popular and durable of Japanese icons, the *samurai* warrior. The tradition of the Japanese warrior has evolved over time through a combination of fact and fiction, reality and myth. That is, the warrior class and their image in discursive terrain each has its own history, and while the two histories often overlap, they are not identical. This course, while reviewing the rise and fall of the warrior class between about the tenth century and the 1870s, explores the evolution of the warrior's image in literature, film, and public debates from the Tokugawa period to the present. Understanding samurai as a discourse, in other words, is an essential skill in this course. In so doing, this course contextualizes the warrior tradition of Japan in the larger political, social, economic and cultural history of Japan and beyond.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

1. READING ASSIGNMENTS: The following books are required for the course, and should be available online or for purchase through the bookstore:

- a. Milton W. Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History* (Rowman & Littlefield; 4 edition, 2012)
- b. Burton Watson, *The Tales of the Heike* (Columbia University Press, 2008)
- c. Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure: The Secret Wisdom of the Samurai* (Tuttle, 2014)
- d. Miyamoto Musashi, *Musashi's Book of Five Rings* (Tuttle Publishing, 2004)
- e. Inazo Nitobe, *Bushido: Soul of Japan* (1900, reprinted by Kodansha USA, 2012 (E-resource available))
- f. Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1938) (Princeton University Press, 2010)

Other readings of article length will be available online.

2. Film ASSIGNMENTS

- a. Kurosawa Akira, *The Seven Samurai* (1956)
- b. War Department, United States of America, *Know Your Enemy: Japan* (1945)
- c. Edward Zwick, *The Last Samurai* (2003)

3. Attendance and participation 20 %

Attendance 5%: If you miss one session, you will lose 1% of the total grade of the course, and an utter-silence penalty in the score of classroom participation. An opportunity to make up an unavoidable absence (typically a 2-page make-up essay) will be given in case of a legitimate, documented emergency/occasion. No show up in your discussion leader session will fail you in this course.

Classroom Participation 15%: You must participate in classroom discussions on a regular basis. Finish all reading assignments before each scheduled lecture and discussion. Please do not try to extraneously ramble without doing reading. Your classmates will waste their time if you do so, which the instructor will stop.

4. Five essays (50 %): Throughout this semester, you have to submit five short essays (up to 4 pages each). The instructor will distribute the paper prompts in class.

5. Take Home Final Exam (30%): A take-home final examination will be distributed at the last meeting of this course, and is due 12/8.

6. Academic Integrity: please read the College guidelines carefully. Any violation, such as plagiarism, will result in a failing grade for the course and will be subject to disciplinary action as stipulated by USC.

7. Extension and Late Paper Policy: The instructor will give a student an extension only for DOCUMENTED emergencies or legitimate occasions. “Being busy for other courses” and “Broken laptop” are not legitimate reasons for an extension. Late submissions will be downgraded one-third of a letter grade (e.g. A- to B+) every day after the deadline.

Course Itinerary

Week I: Orientation

Session 1 (8/22)

Lecture: Orientation and Background information for Japanese history

Session 2 (8/24)

Lecture: The Emergence of Martial Elites

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 1-4

Part I: The Birth of Warrior Elites and the *Tales of the Heike*

Week II: The Taira and the Birth of Warrior Rule

Session 3 (8/29)

Lecture: The Birth of Warrior Rule

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 5; Watson, *The Tales of the Heike*, book 1-5.

Discussion: How does the author of the *Tale of Heike* portray the Taira?

Session 4 (8/31)

Lecture: The Evolution of Medieval Polity

Reading: Watson, *The Tales of the Heike*, book 6-9.

Discussion: How does the author portray the Taira’s attitude toward Buddhist monasteries, Minamoto, and court aristocrats?

Paper #1 Prompt Distributed in Class

Week III: Archetype of the Warrior Idea

No Class-Labor Day (9/5)

Reading: Watson, *The Tales of the Heike*, book 10-11

Session 5 (9/7)

Reading: Watson, *The Tales of the Heike*, book 12 to the end

Discussion: What virtues does the author value in this narrative?

Part II: Early Modern Japan and the Birth of a Samurai Discourse

Week IV: Political Background

Session 6 (9/12)

Lecture: Warring State Japan and Reunification

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 6; *Code for the Warrior Household, Code for the Imperial and Aristocratic Household* (available online)

Discussion: Tokugawa Ideology on Warriors, the Emperor, and Court Aristocrats

Paper #1 Due in class

Session 7 (9/14)

Lecture: The Transformation of Japanese Status System

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 7; Yamamoto, Hagakure, Book 1

Discussion: What does Yamamoto mean by arguing the marrow of the way of the Samurai is death?

Paper #2 Prompt Distributed

Week V: Hagakure and the Warrior Idea in Tokugawa Japan

Session 8 (9/19)

Lecture: Socio-Economic Change in Tokugawa Japan

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 8; Yamamoto Hagakure, Book 2

Discussion: Whom does Yamamoto idealize and denigrate, and how?

Session 9 (9/21)

Lecture: Foreign Relations in Tokugawa Japan

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 9; Yamamoto Hagakure, Book 3

Discussion: Is Yamamoto Religious?

Week VI: Books of Five Rings and Discourse on Fighting Skills

Session 10 (9/26)

Reading: Miyamoto, *Musashi's Book of Five Rings*, The Earth and the Water

Discussion: Why do you think Miyamoto wrote this book? What is he trying to say?

Session 11 (9/28)

Reading: Miyamoto, *Musashi's Book of Five Rings*, The Fire, the wind, the Emptiness

Discussion: How are the contents of this book class-specific?

Part III: Reinventing the Warrior Tradition in Modern Japan

Week VII: Warrior Elites Dismantling Warrior Status

Session 12 (10/3)

Lecture: Meiji Restoration and Dismantled Samurai

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 10

Paper #2 Due in Class

Session 13 (10/5)

Lecture: Reconstructing the Warrior Idea in Meiji Japan

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 11; Nitobe, *Bushido*, chapters 1-7

Discussion: To Nitobe, what is Bushido? What is he trying to say in English?

Distribution of the Paper #3 Prompt

Week VIII: Nitobe in Global Perspective

Session 14 (10/10)

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 12; Nitobe, *Bushido*, chapters 9-13

Discussion: How does Nitobe understand the issue of gender in Bushido? Compare Nitobe's Bushido to Hagakure. How does he understand "suicide" in Bushido?

Session 15 (10/12)

Reading: Nitobe, *Bushido*, chapters 14-17; Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, pp.21-47, 416-42 (available online)

Discussion: How do you compare Nitobe and Smiles?

Week IX: Understanding Samurai in Imperial Japan

Session 16 (10/17)

Lecture: Imperial Japan

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 13-5

Paper #3 Due

Session 17 (10/19)

Lecture: Scholarship as a Discourse

Reading: Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, chapter 1

Discussion: How does Suzuki present Zen to his readers? Is his explanation clear?

Paper #4 Prompt Distributed

Week X: Daisetz T. Suzuki and Zen Samurai

Session 18 (10/24)

Lecture: Historical Background for Zen-Samurai Relations

Reading: Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, chapter 4-5

Discussion: How does he understand the role of Samurai in “Japanese Culture?”

Session 19 (10/26)

Reading: Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, chapter 6

Discussion: How do you compare Suzuki and Miyamoto?

Week XI: Imagining Warrior in Postwar Japan

Session 20 (10/31)

Lecture: Postwar Japan

Reading: Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History*, chapter 16-9

Film Streaming: Kurosawa, *The Seven Samurai* (1956)

Paper #4 due in Class

Session 21 (11/2)

Film Streaming: Kurosawa, *The Seven Samurai*

Paper #5 Prompt Distributed

Week XII: Kurosawa Akira and Samurai Humanism

Session 22 (11/7)

Film Streaming: Kurosawa, *The Seven Samurai*

Session 23 (11/9)

Discussion: How does Kurosawa portray warriors? How do you compare Kurosawa’s approach to the other authors we have read so far? Why do you think he chose the warring state period?

Week XIII: Mishima Yukio and Hagakure

Session 24 (11/14)

Reading: Mishima Yukio, *The Way of the Samurai: Yukio Mishima on Hagakure in Modern Life* (Basic Book, 1977, originally in 1967), pp.3-29, 99-105. (available online)

Discussion: What aspects of *Hagakure* inspire Mishima? How does he (re)interpret Bushido?

Session 25 (11/16)

Lecture: Warrior as a Cultural Icon in the Contemporary World

Discussion: Why do you think Bushido is debated long after the fall of warrior elites?

Coda: American Imagination

Week XIV: Changing American Attitudes Toward Bushido

Session 26 (11/21)

Film Screening: War Department, USA, *Know Your Enemy: Japan* (1945)

Discussion: How does the War Department portray Bushido? How does it understand the attitude of the Japanese state, the emperor, and people to Bushido?

Paper #5 due in Class

Session 27 (11/23)

Film Screening: Edward Zwick, *The Last Samurai* (2003)

Week XV: American Commercial Film and Bushido

Session 28 (11/28)

Film Screening: Edward Zwick, *The Last Samurai* (2003)

Session 29 (11/30)

Discussion: What is Bushido to Zwick? How can we compare the attitudes of the War Department and Zwick toward Bushido?

**Distribution of the Take-home Final Exam
Take Home Final Exam Due 11:59 PM, 12/8**