

**The History of Japan**  
**HIST 578 - Fall 2007**  
M,W,F: 13:10-14:00

Instructor: Sandra Collins, Ph.D.  
Classroom: HSS 349  
Office Hours: M, W, F: 11-12:00 or by appointment  
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This course will trace the key political, economic, social and cultural changes in the Japanese archipelago from prehistoric to contemporary times. This course will also question some of the dominant discourses that have constituted the history of “Japan,” by focusing on critical Western and Japanese re-interpretations of several generative moments in Japanese history: Meiji Restoration; Interwar Fascism; Postwar Occupation and Post-Bubble Japan. Each week we will also review several “historical” artifacts such as film, photographs and other forms of popular culture through which several Japanese artists represent the history of Japan. These artifacts address different historical moments and are products of specific historical contexts; that is, they are about history and are from a historical moment. As such, these artifacts provide a visual medium that concretizes how each artist engages with different historical understanding and memory.

**Course Fulfillments:**

This class fulfills History Major and Minor requirements.  
This course is part of the GE Segment III cluster: America and World Affairs; Category C & Asian Society, Politics and Culture; Category B.  
Segment III courses require 10 pages of structured writing.

**Texts:** Both books are available through the SFSU Bookstore or on-line (half.com, amazon.com, etc.) The Reader can be purchased from the instructor.

Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).  
Varley, Paul. *Japanese Culture* (HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).  
Course Reader of selected readings.

**Films:**

Films will be shown in class on Friday. We will continue to view the remainder of the film on M or F 3:00-5:00pm (to be decided first week) at HSS 349. Films will be available for showing at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor MAC of the SFSU Leonard Library if students are unavailable to make the second screening of the film.

**Course Requirements & Grading:**

**10% - Class participation.** Students will be expected to do the reading for that day of class. Students are encouraged to ask questions to clarify the reading or discuss any matter of interest.

**20% - Write Weekly Thoughts/Questions:** Each student will be asked to write some reflective thoughts (1-5 sentences) or several probing questions (1-3 questions) about the week’s readings, discussions and/or films. These written papers will be used for class

discussions on Wednesdays. I will collect these reflections on Wednesdays to help gauge your attendance and class participation. If you should miss class, you may email them to me by the Friday of that week to receive credit for the questions but not attendance). I will not be grading these assignments, but I will be recording if you have completed them or not. Please ensure that they are edited and put your name and date at the top of the page. Some questions to consider may include:

1. What type of criticism is inherent in the text or film?
2. What are your impressions of the author/film director's use of historical materials/evidence?
3. Do you think the representation of history is accurate?
4. What common tropes are used to signify the historical event?
5. Does the author/film director address how history is remembered/forgotten?
6. Do you enjoy the reading/film? Why or why not?

**70% - Two 5-page, double-spaced, 12 point font papers.** The first paper will be due on **October 26, 2007** and the second on **December 17, 2007.** (Each paper will constitute **35% of your course grade**). No extensions.

### Essays:

For both essays, write an on a historical issue of your choosing on any period in Japanese history. You are also encouraged to create your own essay question, **but you must get the approval of the Instructor before doing so. Please submit your proposed question via email or come to my office hours to discuss possible ideas.** You may also choose to answer one question from the following:

1. Was the *Meiji Ishin* a movement that can be characterized as a revolution or a restoration?
2. Identify one or two key historical moments in which the notion of an indigenous or unique culture was critical to the rulers / leaders of Japan. How did this function in establishing political authority?
3. Was Japan's militant imperialism during WWII a mere "dark valley" to its otherwise successful path to modernization? Discuss the politics behind the dominant American narrative of a modern, democratic Japan.
4. Explore the relationship of politics and culture in two different moments in Japanese history. Were they the same or different in the two periods?
5. Discuss the importance of being cultured to the 1) court / nobility and 2) samurai class in both the Kamakura and Tokugawa periods. How were they the same/different? Was there significant change between the two timeframes?
6. Discuss one or two films. Focus on how each director engages with different historical moments in Japan. How is history represented and narrated? Are there villains and heroes involved in creating change, or is change located elsewhere, in deeper structural issues which dictate the course of history? Was the film successful? Why or why not?
7. Is modernity different in Japan from the West?
8. Choose a person, event or movement discussed throughout the course and analyze why they/it was critical to the dynamics of change or stability in Japanese history.
9. Analyze how the roles of gender have often been carefully defined politically and culturally in one historical period. You may choose to compare/contrast your assessment to another historical period.

You will be asked to cite course materials and one outside class reference (an article from any journals on Japanese history such as the *Journal of Japanese Studies*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, *Monumenta Nipponica*, etc. or a book). The paper should be 5 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font paper with page number on the upper right-hand corner, stapled on the upper left hand corner making appropriate documentation by footnoting the author, title of book/article with the page number of the source material you cite, paraphrase or summarize in your essay. Observe school policies on plagiarism.

**Overall grading:**

93% & up	A	91-92	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-	below 60	F

All requirements must be fulfilled in order to get a passable grade. An “I” will only be granted upon written request, with good reason, and when the student has completed at least 50% of the course requirements. A “WU” will be assigned if the student fails to fulfill all course requirements without completing a petition for an Incomplete or Withdrawal.

**Course website:**

The course website will include basic course materials (syllabus, handouts, assignments, bibliography of additional materials). Some course readings will be available on-line, either through the website or through SFSU’s Library’s electronic resources.

***Draft: Subject to Change.***

Key to Readings:

- Gordon
- Varley
- Course Reader (CR)

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1: Class Introduction**

- 8/29 (Course Objectives, Grading, Requirements)  
History ≠ Memory  
Nature of history as interpretive and critical engagement with “past.”
- 8/31 **Lecture: Origins of “Japan”.**  
Reading: CR (Fawcett pp, Katayama pp)

**Week 2: Yamato State & Influx of Chinese Culture**

- 9/3 No Class- Labor Day
- 9/5 Lecture; Reading Varley 1-18.
- 9/7 In class film: *Shinto: Nature, Gods and Man in Japan (7224)*

**Week 3: Heian Japan**

- 9/10: Lecture
- 9/12 Reading Varley 19-47.

9/14: In class film: *Onmyoji* (2001; director Takita)

**Week 4: Kamakura/ Muromachi: Rise of the Bakufu & Warring States**

9/17: Lecture; Reading CR (Berry); Varley 77-89.

9/19 Reading: Varley 90-139; Yoshihiko & Yasumaru hand outs

9/21 In class film: *Ugetsu* (1951; Mizoguchi)

**Week 5 Tokugawa: Feudalism & Its Limits**

9/24: Lecture; Reading Varley 140-204

**Last Day Add/Drop**

9/26: Reading: CR(Yoshihiko)

9/28: In class film: *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* (1960; Nakagawa); *Life of Oharu* (1952: Mizoguchi)

**Week 6 Meiji Ishin: Restoration or Revolution?**

10/1: Lecture: Within/Without; Reading Varley 205-234

10/3: Reading: Gordon pp 1-60; CR(Norinaga, Hiraga and Yoshihiko)

10/5: In class film: *Hidden Blade* (2004; Yamada)

**Week 7 Meiji & Modernization**

10/8: Lecture

10/10: Reading: Gordon pp. 61-136

10/12: **No Class**

**Week 8 Taisho/Showa Japan Modernism**

10/15: Lecture Nation Building

10/17: Reading: Gordon pp. 139-161

10/19: Slides: Woodblock prints

In-class viewing of black & white silent films,

1) Pre-war Japanese Proletarian films:

<http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/cjs/publications/cjsfaculty/filmprofilms.html>

2) *Dragnet Girl* (1933; Ozu)

**Week 9 Interwar Japan**

10/22: Lecture; Reading: Gordon pp. 182-200

10/24: Reading CR (Harootunian & Najita)

10/26: Slides: Modernism in Japan

In class film: *The Sisters of Gion* (1936; Mizoguchi)

**First Essay due.**

**Week 10 Asian-Pacific War**

10/29: Lecture

10/31 Reading Gordon pp. 204-225; CR (Ienaga)

11/2: In class film: *Black Rain* (1989; Shohei Imamura) or *24 Eyes* (1954; Kinoshita)

**Week 11 Postwar/ Occupied Japan**

11/5 Lecture

- 11/7: Reading: Gordon (226-240).  
11/9: In class film: *MacArthur's Children* (Shinoda; 1984), *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (1960; Naruse) or *Woman in the Dunes* (1964; Teshigahara)

**Week 12 Americanization of Japan**

- 11/12 Lecture  
11/14: Reading: CR (Harootunian)  
11/16: In class film: *Equinox Flower* (1958; Ozu)

**Week 13**

No Classes – Thanksgiving Week

**Week 14 Japanese Economic Miracle**

- 11/26: Lecture  
11/28: Reading: Selections from *The Japan that Can Say No*, Ishihara and Morita  
Full text (English) <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?r101:E14NO9-1>  
11/30: In class film: *Tampopo* (1989; Itami Juzo)

**Week 15 Postmodernism and Japan**

- 12/3: Lecture: Metaphor of Postmodernism; Reading: Gordon pp. 270-304  
12/5: Reading CR (Ivy)  
12/7: In class film: *Tony Takitani* (2004; Ichikawa)

**Week 16 Contemporary Japan: Neonationalism & Globalization**

- 12/10: Lecture: Reading: Gordon pps. 310-328.  
12/12: Reading: CR (Lamarre)  
12/14: **Last class; Review, Reflections.** In class clip: *Afro Samurai* (2006; Okazaki)

- 12/17: *Second paper due in my office, HSS 267A, 12:10pm. Absolutely no extensions.***  
**1/3: Grades due**

**Happy Holidays!**