

HIST 396 SAMURAI IN FILM.

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**Samurai
Course**

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Samurai

Japan's *samurai* warriors constitute one of the distinct elements of pre-20th Japanese society, culture, and government. They are still with us as a “ready-reference” in a number of contexts: *anime* samurai from outer space; samurai businessman; “Last Samurai;” the samurai spirit that infuses the martial arts; practitioners of the samurai ethos of *bushido* (death before defeat, self-sacrifice etc); and exponents of *hara-kiri* (*hari-kari* in incorrect English use).

The historical samurai class evolved over time. While a warrior class existed for nearly 1000 years (900s to late 1800s), for the vast bulk of this time Japan was at peace, and warriors only rarely died while fighting. The political position of the warrior class was also varied: prominent in rural areas in the 900s, it gradually acquired greater national political power, and after 1600 it monopolized national government. The social composition of the warrior class also changed, from rural land-managers and administrators, to members of a “warrior government” in the 1180s, to major cultural patrons from the 1300s, from hereditary families through the 1400s to being drawn from any social background by the late 1500s, to hereditary bureaucrats from the 1600s.

In this class we shall acquaint ourselves with some of that evolution, and also with some ways in which warriors (and commoners) reacted to the changes, in the medieval era (roughly 1150s-1600) when they were most involved in warfare. Our main focus will be on the 16th century.

Course Structure.

The course combines lectures and films. In addition to assigned readings designed to provide broader context, we will utilize a number of some film synopses to outline the main theme and to provide additional historical context.

Expected workload.

In order to satisfactorily complete the course, in addition to attendance at class, students will need to allocate at least ten hours per week for completing reading assignments and to reviewing films that have been shown in class. Also, in my own experience, preparing a good film report can entail viewing a film at least three times, in order to clarify details. That is, writing the report requires good acquaintance with the film.

Evaluation.

All written work to be submitted is to be double spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font, and printed on only one side of the page.

1/ **Attendance** is required (15% of course grade); please let me know if there are mitigating circumstances for an absence.

2/ A **First Quiz** on **7/01** (20% of course grade).

3/ A 1200-word exploration of Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, focusing on a particular theme: for example, social values and attitudes; castles; historical figures such as Nobunaga or Hideyoshi; customs (20% of course grade). **It is due no later than 7/09.**

4/ A film report, at least 1300 words in length, on *Ogress*, *Seven Samurai*, *Heaven and Earth*, or *The Shadow Warrior* (25% of course grade). The report is to focus on themes relating to warriors: warriors and society, warfare, or notions of honor, and is **not** a film review. See guidelines at end of syllabus. **It is due no later than 7/14.**

6/ A **Second Quiz** on **7/16** (20% of course grade). It will be based on course material covered since the first quiz, and compared to the first quiz will have more emphasis on the films.

7/ **Failure to pass the Second Quiz is an automatic fail for the entire course.**

Assigned Text. Michael Cooper, *They Came to Japan*.

Additional Readings. All potentially examinable. They will be available on Blackboard, under Course Documents.

Study Guides: Will be available on Blackboard, under Course Documents.

Synopses of Films: Guides to a number of the films will be available on Blackboard, under Course Documents.

Book Exploration and Film Report Guidelines

Book exploration of Cooper, *They Came to Japan*.

You are to focus your efforts on a couple of themes in which you might have a particular interest, such as: values of warriors, loyalty, customs and attitudes, castles, violence, significant figures (eg Nobunaga or Hideyoshi),.

We will also address the book exploration in class.

Film Report

There are several ways in which you can craft a film report. In this course, the emphasis is on your writing a report that demonstrates clear familiarity with the film; and that you have reflected on some of the themes or issues relating to samurai and warfare. Please remember that the class is not one on film or film history; and that the film report is **NOT** a film review that deals with directors, cinema technique, and suchlike. If it reads like a film review rather than something written for this course, then you may easily achieve an “F” grade.

The report could emphasize a particular theme that comes through in the film, or even a couple of themes. You could also reflect upon the film and discuss issues that occurred to you. We will address some possibilities in class.

The **least desirable** film report, which being such is not to be submitted (and if so might well earn a grade of “F”) is one that provides a synopsis of the film – after all, we’ve all seen it.

Feel free to inform your report with ideas and general information that you may have encountered in the readings, although this is not required in order to write a successful report.

Course Achievements:

By the end of the course, you will have had the opportunity to:

- Appreciate the broader social and historical context for the samurai.
- Gain a sense of various ways in which warfare impacts a society.
- Gain an in-depth familiarity with the workings of society and social groups in a culture distant in time and place.
- Become familiar with how historians explain social contexts of human behavior.
- Develop your skills in analyzing and interpreting primary source material.
- Develop your skills in writing and presenting your own conclusions.

Classroom Protocol:

We see the classroom as a collective learning environment, where you concentrate on the class content, and not distract either yourself or anyone around you.

Cell-phones, texting etc: please turn cell phones to silent mode; and do not use them while the class is in session (life-threatening emergencies excepted). Lap-tops, iPads etc: to be used for taking notes. If it appears that they are being used for non-class-related reasons, you may be asked to turn them off.

The classroom is not a theater or your living-room: 1/ Please eat breakfast before you come to class, not in it. 2/ If however you have a candy/sugar craving, odorless items are preferred, and we do not want to hear you opening them noisily. 3/ Non-alcoholic liquids are OK.

Please arrive on time. Late arrivals are always disruptive. Late arrival for quizzes may prevent you from taking them.

LECTURE, FILM AND READING SCHEDULE.

WEEK ONE

- 6/22 *Warrior Graveyard: Samurai Back From the Dead*
Fourteenth Century Warfare.
- 6/23 *Onibaba* 鬼婆 **The Ogress**. (VT 05493; 104 mins; DVD 05063)
- 6/24 Sixteenth Century Fragmentation.
Villagers, Villages, and Samurai.
- 6/25 *Shichinin no samurai* 七人の侍 **The Seven Samurai**. (DVD 03041; 203 mins.).

Reading for Week One:

- Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, 3-20, 28-34, 40-48, 53-55, 59-66, 189-199, 205-211, 215-223, 355-367.
- Goble, "War and Injury: The Emergence of Wound Medicine in Medieval Japan." *Monumenta Nipponica*, 60.3 (2005), pp. 297-338.
- Morimoto, "Note on the Technique of Decapitation in Medieval Japan," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Nippon*, 95.4 (1987), pp. 477-486.
- Friday, "What a Difference a Bow Makes."
- Conlan, "The Nature of Warfare in Fourteenth-Century Japan: The Record of Nomoto Tomoyuki." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 25.2 (Summer 1999), pp. 299-330.

WEEK TWO

- 6/29 (cont): *Shichinin no samurai* 七人の侍 **The Seven Samurai**.
- 6/30 Warlords and Governing: the Mōri.
Warrior Armor.
- 7/01 First Quiz**
Takeda Shingen and His Army: 4th Battle of Kawanakajima, 1561.
- 7/02 *Ten to chi to* 天と地と (**Heaven and Earth**). (VT 06718, 104 mins.)

Reading for Week Two

- Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, 42-47, 55-60, 84-85.
- Steenstrup, "Hōjō Sōun's Twenty-One Articles: The Code of Conduct of the the Odawara Hōjō." *Monumenta Nipponica*, 29.3 (1974), 283-303.
- Goble, "Manase Physicians, Mōri *daimyō*, and the New Medico-Cultural Nexus of the Late 16th Century."
- Stavros, "Military Revolution in Early Modern Japan," *Japanese Studies* 33.3 (2013), 243-261.

WEEK THREE

- 7/06 Oda Nobunaga: The Alpha Warlord.
Battle of Nagashino, 1575.
- 7/07 *Kagemusha* 影武者 **The Shadow Warrior.** (DVD 01510, 180 mins).
- 7/08 (cont) *Kagemusha* 影武者 **The Shadow Warrior.** (DVD 01510, 180 mins).
- 7/09 Family Costs of War: Loss and Sacrifice.
Hideyoshi's Programs

Report on Cooper *They Came to Japan* due.

Reading for Week Three

Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, 93-103, 131-135, 142-145, 151-164, 251-266, 275-283, 334-340.
Nagahara, "Shaping the Process of Unification: Technological Progress." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 14.1 (Winter 1988), pp. 77-109.
Birt, "Samurai In Passage: The Transformation of the Sixteenth-Century Kanto," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 11.2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 369-399.

WEEK FOUR

- 7/13 Battle of Sekigahara, 1600.
The Peace Dividend: Reshaping the Samurai.
- 7/14 Loyalty and Service: To Whom is One True?
Harakiri 切腹 **Ritual Suicide.** (VT 06739; 134 mins.).

Film report due

- 7/15 (cont) *Harakiri* 切腹 (**Ritual Suicide**).

7/16 Second Quiz.

Reading for Week Four

Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, 27-28, 79-83, 111-124, 135-140, 284-289, 343-342, 385-395, 401-402.
Spafford, "Apology of Betrayal." *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 35.2 (Summer 2009), pp. 321-352.