

Winter 2018

HIST 396 SAMURAI IN FILM.

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General

Japan's *samurai* warriors were one of the distinct elements of pre-20th century Japanese society, culture, and government.

While a specific warrior class existed for nearly 1000 years (900s to late 1800s), for the bulk of this time Japan was at peace, and warriors only rarely died while fighting. There was also a shift in the political position of the warrior class: prominent in rural areas in the 900s, to monopolizing national government from the 1600s. 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 and keepers of the peace from the 1600s to the 1870s.

However, the samurai have continued to enjoy a virtual as well as a historical existence. Samurai and their ethos may be encountered in such contexts as: *anime samurai* from outer space; *samurai* businessman; as the *samurai* spirit that infuses the martial arts; the *samurai* ethos of *bushido* in World War Two (self-immolation, death before defeat, self-sacrifice); and exponents of *hara-kiri* (*hari-kari* in some English use).

And, in film, samurai appear as "historical samurai," as bearers of enduring cultural images, or as vehicles for social criticism. That is, when we see samurai, we sometimes see something of the shifting cultural and political currents of modern Japan (and entertainment!). We also find them appropriated in films produced for other cultural contexts (*The Magnificent Seven*, or a remake of the 47 *rōnin* story with Keanu Reeves and an ahistorical denouement).

This class will look at aspects of the samurai during the period 1330-1630, with particular attention to the 16th century. This is the period when samurai were most likely to be habitually engaged in warfare, and were often presented with fluid social and personal situations that raised basic questions of self-identity, place in society, and acceptable behavior.

Course Structure.

The course is a combined lecture, film, and reading course. Films are generally preceded by a lecture. In addition some film synopses will be provided (on Canvas) to outline main themes 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 ten hours or so 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.

Evaluation.

1/ Attendance is required (10% of course grade).

2/ **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.**

3/ A mid-term **02/07** (20% of course grade). Study guide provided.

4/ A 1300-word exploration of Cooper's *They Came to Japan*. The report is to focus on a particular theme: for example, social values and attitudes; castles; historical figures such as Nobunaga or Hideyoshi; customs (20% of course grade). Due no later than **02/21**.

5/ A film report, at least 1300 words in length, on *Ogress*, *Seven Samurai*, *Hidden Fortress*, *Heaven and Earth*, or *The Shadow Warrior* (worth 20% course grade). The report is to focus on themes relating to warriors (as some examples, warriors and society, warfare, notions of honor, women and warfare) and is **not** a film review. See guidelines at end of syllabus. Due no later than **03/07**.

6/ A final exam on **03/21** (1900, regular classroom, 30% of course grade). It will be based on course material covered since the mid-term. Study guide provided.

7/ **Failure to pass the final exam is an automatic fail for the entire course.**

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

Additional Readings. All potentially examinable (study guides will be more specific). They are available on Canvas.

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 sources material.

Develop your skills in writing and presenting your own conclusions.

ANTICIPATED LECTURE, FILM AND READING SCHEDULE

- WEEK I 01/10.** Introduction and General Overview of Japan, 1330-1630.
The New Violence of the 14th Century.
Warrior Graveyard: Back From the Dead.
- Reading:** Cooper, *They Came to Japan*, Preface, chapters 1, 2, 3, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20.
Friday, "What a Difference a Bow Makes."
- WEEK II 01/17.** Guest Lecture, Ms. Bree Goosmann: War, Society, and Women.
Onibaba 鬼婆 (**The Ogress**) (DVD 05063; 104 mins.).
- Reading:** Cooper, chapters 9, 14.
Goble, "War and Injury: The Emergence of Wound Medicine in Medieval Japan." *Monumenta Nipponica*, 60.3 (2005), pp. 297-338.
- WEEK III 01/24** Lecture: The Sixteenth Century Fragmentation.
Lecture: Villages and villagers.
Shichinin no samurai 七人の侍 (**The Seven Samurai**) (DVD 03041) (203 mins).
- Reading:** Cooper, chapters 3, 4, 9, 11, 12.
Steenstrup, "Hōjō Sōun's Twenty-One Articles: The Code of Conduct of the Odawara Hōjō." *Monumenta Nipponica*, 29.3 (1974), 283-303.
- WEEK IV 01/31** **continuing** *Shichinin no samurai* (**The Seven Samurai**).
- Reading:** Cooper, chapters 3, 4, 9, 11, 12.
- WEEK V 02/07.** **MID-TERM EXAM**
- Lecture: Weapons and Armor.
Guest Lecture: Ms. Emily Cole: The Development of Castles.
- Reading:** Cooper, chapter 8.
Stavros, "Military Revolution in Early Modern Japan," *Japanese Studies* 33.3 (2013), 243-261.

WEEK VI 02/14 Lecture: Warrior loyalty.
Kakushi toride no san akunin 隠し砦の三悪人 (**The Hidden Fortress**) [DVD 01011; 139 mins.].

Reading: Cooper, chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.
Spafford, "Apology of Betrayal." *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 35.2 (Summer 2009), pp. 321-352.

WEEK VII 02/21. Exploration of Cooper due.
Lecture: The Battle of Kawanakajima: Uesugi and Takeda clans.
Ten to chi to 天と地と (**Heaven and Earth**). (VT 06718, 104 mins.).

Reading: Cooper, chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.
Asao, "Sixteenth Century Unification."

WEEK VIII 02/28. Lecture: Warlord Government and Administration: the Mōri family.
Lecture: Destruction and Unification: Takeda, Oda, and Tokugawa.
Kagemusha 影武者 (**The Shadow Warrior**). (DVD 01510; 180 mins.).

Reading: Cooper, chapters 6, 7, 8, 9.
Wakita, "The Emergence of the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan."

WEEK IX 03/07. Film report due. Last date by which film report can be handed in.
Kagemusha 影武者 (**The Shadow Warrior**) (continuing).

Reading: Cooper, chapters 6, 7, 8, 9.
Nagahara, "Shaping the Process of Unification: Technological Progress." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 14.1 (Winter 1988), pp. 77-109.

WEEK X 03/14. Lecture: The End of War: Samurai Reshaped.
Harakiri 切腹 (**Ritual Suicide**). (VT 06739; 134 mins.).

Reading: Cooper, chapter 7.

FINAL EXAM: 03/21 1915, regular classroom (McKenzie 240A).

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GUIDE FOR FILM REPORT AND BOOK EXPLORATION

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.

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

This book exploration will be a different effort than a film report.

You are to also 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.