

## **Hist 396: Modern Japanese History**

Fall 2012

T/Th 11-12:15, Bishop 112

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Office hours: Tuesdays 9-11,  
or by appointment

### **Course Goals:**

This course examines the emergence of modern Japan from the late 1500s to the present. Class lecture and discussion will analyze the historical background from which modern Japan emerged, identify the principal political and cultural developments in her transition to a modern industrial society, explore the rise and fall of Japan's colonial empire and examine her emergence as a major world power today. Intertwined with analysis of events, people and ideas, we will consider key theoretical debates on the meaning of "modernity" and how these analytical frameworks influence our understanding of Japan's past and present.

By the conclusion of the course students will be able to:

- Articulate the defining characteristics of Tokugawa politics and society.
- Assess the extent to which preconditions for a "modern" society and economy were evident in the early modern period.
- Formulate an opinion on the importance of domestic and external forces in the disintegration of Tokugawa rule.
- Identify the central influences in Japan's rise as an imperial power and her recovery from defeat.
- Define the responsibilities and costs of Japan's emergence as a world power.
- Evaluate Japanese literature as a historical source and critique the arguments of professional historians.

### **Required texts:**

Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan*. (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Hanley, Susan. *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan: The Hidden Legacy of Material Culture*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Katsu Kokichi. *Musui's Story: The Autobiography of a Tokugawa Samurai*. Trans. Teruko Craig. (Univ. of Arizona Press, 1991).

Oda Makoto. *The Breaking Jewel*. Trans. Donald Keene (NY: Columbia University Press, 2003).

Tanizaki Jun'ichiro. *Some Prefer Nettles*. Trans. Edward Seidensticker. (Vintage, 1995).

Additional readings on Blackboard in PDF.

## **Grading Policy:**

I will consider both improvement and effort in assigning a final grade, but assignments will be weighted as follows:

|               |     |                              |
|---------------|-----|------------------------------|
| 3 essays      | 45% | (150 points each, 450 total) |
| Midterm exam  | 20% | (200 points)                 |
| Final exam    | 25% | (250 points)                 |
| Participation | 10% | (100 points)                 |

No one will receive passing credit for the course without submitting all of the written assignments. Written assignments will be assessed a half letter-grade penalty for each day they are late. Documented health and family emergencies will be exempt from this policy.

## **Requirements**

### A. Essays

You will be required to write three, five-page essays: (1) analyzing and critiquing the historical argument of Everyday Things (2) examining Some Prefer Nettles as a product of its time (3) comparing the depiction of Japanese soldiers in the novel The Breaking Jewel with that in the studio film Letters from Iwo Jima. Further details and instructions will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard. These essays will be due in hard copy at the beginning of class, on the dates listed in the syllabus, before discussion of the book in question.

B. Midterm and final exams: Study guides will be posted on Blackboard.

C. Participation: Students are expected to read all assigned texts for class meetings in advance of the lecture and discussion. You should come to class with the texts for the day in hand as well as questions about the content and its historical significance. At the end of the semester, I will evaluate the thoughtfulness and frequency of your participation when deciding what final mark to assign borderline grades. Laptop computer use is not allowed.

### **Plagiarism**

I have zero tolerance for intellectual dishonesty. Confirmed cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the course and potentially other sanctions by the University. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

\* The syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor, and students are responsible for adhering to these alterations.

## Reading and lecture schedule

|        |        |   |
|--------|--------|---|
| Week 1 | Aug 21 | Introduction: Japan's Geography and Language  |
|        | Aug 23 | Tokugawa Political Heritage<br>Read: Gordon, Intro and chapter 1, and <a href="#">Hideyoshi</a> , 206-25. (PDF)   |
| Week 2 | Aug 28 | The Tokugawa World View<br>Read edicts of the Tokugawa shogunate<br><a href="http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/tokugawa_edicts_foreigners.pdf">http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/tokugawa_edicts_foreigners.pdf</a> |
|        | Aug 30 | Tokugawa Society and Culture<br>Read: Gordon, Chapter 2; and Yamaga Soko<br><a href="http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/soko_samurai.pdf">http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/soko_samurai.pdf</a>                     |
| Week 3 | Sep 4  | Discussion of <a href="#">Musui's Story</a><br>In class quiz on autobiography and map quiz  |
|        | Sep 6  | Film screening: <a href="#">Double Suicide</a> (Masahiro Shinoda, 1969)<br>Midterm exam essay question will come from film  |
| Week 4 | Sep 11 | <a href="#">Double Suicide</a> , cont.  |
|        | Sep 13 | Discussion of <a href="#">Everyday Things</a><br><b>*Essay 1 due</b>  |
| Week 5 | Sep 18 | Internal Crises<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 3; "Tale of a Dream" and "Oshio's Protest" (PDF)   |
|        | Sep 20 | External Threat<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 4; Aizawa Seishisai "New Theses" and Sakuma Shōzan, (PDF)  |
| Week 6 | Sep 25 | The Opening of Japan<br>Letters of President Millard Fillmore and Commodore Perry to Emperor (PDF) and "Black ships" essays on <a href="#">Visualizing Cultures</a> website   |
|        | Sep 27 | The Meiji Restoration: The Return of the Emperor?<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 5; Bolitho "The Meiji Restoration" (PDF).  |
| Week 7 | Oct 2  | Film screening: <a href="#">Meiji: Japan's Response to the West</a>   |
|        | Oct 4  | Popular Rights and the Meiji Constitution<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 6; "Meiji Constitution"; Ubukata, and <a href="#">Discourse</a> . (PDF)  |

|         |         |   |
|---------|---------|---|
| Week 8  | Oct 9   | Midterm Exam  |
|         | Oct 11  | Meiji Capitalism<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 7<br><br>Evening lecture by Mary Elizabeth Berry, Professor, University of California at Berkeley                                 |
| Week 9  | Oct. 16 | The Rise of Imperialism<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 8; Tokutomi Sohō, "Treaty of Portsmouth" (PDF)   |
|         | Oct. 18 | Discussion of <u>Some Prefer Nettles</u><br><b>*Essay 2 due</b>   |
| Week 10 | Oct. 23 | Imperial Democracy: Plurality and Backlash<br>Read: Gordon, chapters 9 and 10   |
|         | Oct. 25 | The Road to War<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 11 and 12; Okakura, Ishihara, Konoe, Hashimoto (PDF)   |
| Week 11 | Oct. 30 | War in the Pacific  |
|         | Nov. 1  | Discussion of <u>Letters from Iwo Jima</u> and <u>The Breaking Jewel</u><br><b>*Essay 3 due</b>   |
| Week 12 | Nov. 6  | Defeat and the Occupation<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 13.  |
|         | Nov. 8  | Japan and the Cold War: <u>Godzilla</u> as History<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 15; Tsutsui, "The Birth of Gojira" (PDF)<br><br>Watch <u>Godzilla</u> before coming to class.   |
| Week 13 | Nov. 13 | William Faulkner in Japan<br>Read: Faulkner Nobel speech and "To the Youth of Japan" (PDF)  |
|         | Nov. 15 | The Economic Miracle<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 14.   |
| Week 14 | Nov. 27 | The Crisis of Modernity at Century's End<br>Read: Gordon, chapter 17; Oe "Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself" 1183, 1185 and Murakami "super-frog saves tokyo" 111-140 (PDF). |
|         | Nov. 29 | Wrap-up and review  |

**Exam: Tuesday, December 4 at noon**