

HIST 454 – The Age of the Samurai
Spring 2007
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00-12:15

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Who were the samurai and how did they gain control in Japan?
How did living under samurai rule affect people's values and priorities? What ideals did samurai pursue? How did non-samurai view both the samurai and samurai values? Why have samurai continued to attract attention even after their disappearance? How and why have people condemned or glamorized samurai at different times?
What can the study of samurai, samurai rule, and samurai images tell us about our own world and society?

In class and discussion section, we will explore these questions together using a set of common readings.

Each of you also comes to this class with your own particular interests in such topics as military history, philosophy and spirituality, film and animation, or current events. We will use the discussion boards on Learn@UW to extend our conversations into these areas, giving you the opportunity to brainstorm, discuss, share your enthusiasm and deepen your knowledge in the areas of most interest to you.

Course Goals and Evaluation

The purpose of this course is to use the fascinating history of the samurai (and of images of samurai) to help you develop and improve your skills of historical analysis. That is, this course will not only help you understand what scholars now know about samurai and their history; it will also give you tools that you can use in the future to evaluate whether or not you should believe what you find in a book, film, or website about samurai.

Because the goal of the course is not memorization but rather analysis, there will be no in-class exams. Instead, there will be several opportunities for you to practice the skills of historical analysis, demonstrate your mastery of those skills, receive feedback, and repeat the process. Seven of these opportunities (one group exercise, four papers, on-line discussion, and discussion section) will receive formal grades that evaluate your mastery of the skills of historical analysis. Your final grade for the semester will be based on the top five of those seven grades.

We encourage you to take advantage of each of the exercises, discussions, and resources that we make available. Every activity has been carefully designed to help you improve at least one of the relevant skills. If you take advantage of these opportunities – and consult with us when anything seems unclear – we anticipate that you will succeed in the class.

Skills of Historical Analysis

Comparing and Contrasting

- Recognize changes and continuities over time.
- Given two different texts, identify differences and similarities between them, then use the following skills to explain those differences and similarities.

Evaluating Evidence

- Ask questions of evidence (a written, visual, or performed “text”) in order to determine how it can be used.
- Based on answers to those questions, determine which conclusions can (and can’t) be drawn from that text.

Identifying Perspective

- Use clues from the text to identify the possible perspective of the author.
- Suggest ways in which the author’s perspective affects his or her ideas.
- Suggest ways in which the author’s perspective affects how he or she communicates those ideas.
- Use evidence from the text to support your suggestion that those influences are plausible.

Analyzing in Context

- Identify possible influences on the author at the time that he or she is writing.
- Identify ways in which the author might be seeking to change aspects of his or her world through this text.
- Use evidence from both the text and the (political, social, intellectual, etc.) context to support your analysis.

Communicating your Analysis

- Demonstrate your ability to communicate your understanding and analysis effectively through
 - o explicit statement of your argument (thesis);
 - o clear, logical organization;
 - o effective use of relevant evidence to support important points, including:
 - indications of why the source is convincing;
 - appropriate use of paraphrasing or quotation; and
 - explanation of how the evidence contributes to your argument;
 - o grammatical, correctly-spelled writing.

Applying Historical Analysis beyond the Classroom

- Suggest ways in which the ideas in the texts that you studied might have changed the ways people thought or acted in the past, or may continue to affect people in the present or future.
- Suggest ways in which your analysis might change the way we look at the world.

Papers

There will be four opportunities for you to test out and demonstrate your mastery of the skills of historical analysis in the form of an analytical paper. The topic for each paper appears in the syllabus under the due date of either the outline or the paper itself. Each paper requires you to analyze material from the most recent segment of the class in relation to earlier material. Each paper, therefore, encourages you to synthesize what you have learned so far during the semester.

Each paper should be 3-5 pages long, double-spaced, in size 12 font, with 1- to 1-1/2-inch margins. *Attach your original outline, your revised outline, and a self-evaluation form (available on Learn@UW) to the back of the paper.* This will help us provide you with constructive feedback.

On-Line Discussion Forums

The on-line discussion forums provide a space for you and your peers to work together to analyze material of special interest to you. There are four forums already set up:

- military history;
- philosophy and spirituality;
- film and animation; and
- current events.

Feel free to participate in as many or as few forums as you like.

Each forum exists for open discussion related to the topic of the forum. In order to enhance the contribution of the on-line discussions to the goals of the course, however, we especially recommend that you

- 1) share a resource (and begin evaluation and analysis of it),
- 2) contribute to the ongoing evaluation and analysis of a previously posted resource, or
- 3) both.

What kinds of resources might you share or analyze? Anything goes (within reason: this is a site at a public university, so please use appropriate discretion) if you can explain to your peers' (and, occasionally, the professor's or TA's) satisfaction how you see this material related to *both* the goals of the class and the topic of the forum.

IMPORTANT: Don't simply condemn a resource or use one resource to condemn another; instead, analyze each resource – asking who wrote it, when, why, etc. – to understand why the two disagree (or agree) with each other, how you might interpret that disagreement (or agreement), and why both might be important.

For the Military History Forum, possible resources might include:

a website about European knights or armor

How and why did the European versions differ from their Japanese counterparts? How and why were they similar? What do those similarities and differences tell us?

a link to an article about military organization in 16th-century Japan

Does it look well-substantiated? Does the author understand the larger context (that you know about because of this class)? What is this article helpful for? How is it misleading? Why or why not?

For the Philosophy and Spirituality Forum, possible resources might include:

an excerpt from a philosophical writing from another time or place that addresses issues similar to those raised in a reading from the class

What is similar? What is different? Why? What effects might those differences have on later interpretations of the texts?

an excerpt from a class reading for further analysis

How does the author's background shape his or her perspective and writing? Given the different contexts of the author and ourselves, how might the author's recommendations be applicable (or inapplicable) in our lives today?

For the Film and Animation Forum, possible resources might include:

a reference to a scene from a film or anime (with information on how other forum participants can find the film or anime in order to see it)

How does the setting, plot, or character portray material related to what we've covered in class? Why did the creator portray it that way? If you were directing, what might you do differently, and why?

A link to a film or anime review

What is the perspective of the reviewer? Why does he or she review the work in this way? Does the review use any of the skills of historical analysis to evaluate the work? How well? Why or why not?

For the Current Events Forum, possible resources might include:

a link to a news story or analysis of military rule, civil war, or images of the military around the world today

What similarities or differences do you see between these situations or images and those we have studied in class? What might the perspective evident in this news story or analysis suggest about possible ways to interpret Japanese history? What insights might what we've learned in this class offer into current events?

a link to a news story or analysis of current events in Japan

What relationship do you see between the topic or analysis of the story and what we've learned in class? How might approaches or material we've covered in class suggest different ways to interpret current events in Japan?

During the last two weeks of the semester, we will ask you to evaluate your own participation in the discussion forum according to the "Skills of Historical Analysis." We will then use your self-evaluation to help determine your grade for this section.

Discussion Section

Discussion sections provide an opportunity for you to practice the skills of historical analysis collaboratively while receiving immediate feedback and guidance. In order to benefit fully from discussion (as from lecture), you should complete the readings listed for that date before each meeting. See the discussion section syllabus for information on assessment.

Recognition of Influences

As you will notice during our analysis of the texts, each writer is influenced by his or her context – by his or her social, geographical, or economic background; by prevalent ideas; by contemporary events; or by the writings of other people. As scholars, it is our responsibility to recognize not only the influences on the people whose work we study, but also the influences on ourselves. Why do we have the perspective we do on a text? When we make an argument, trying to convince someone of something, whose ideas do we draw upon? Whether we use ideas from a book, a conversation, a website, or an advertisement, we must – both morally and legally – acknowledge the source of those ideas. Failure to acknowledge sources is, in fact, a crime: plagiarism. As such, plagiarism – the unacknowledged borrowing of words or ideas – is punishable under state and national law and, on the UW campus, under UW policies. (For more information, see: <http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#overview>)

There are three ways in which scholars recognize sources: in-text citations, footnotes, and endnotes. For information on these methods, see:

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html>

We recommend the Chicago/Turabian method. Whichever method you choose, however, you must use consistently throughout the paper. If you use an in-text citation method, be sure to include a bibliography. We will be happy to answer any questions.

Policy on Deadlines

We recognize that you have many demands upon your time, and that emergencies may arise. This is one reason why only five of the seven possible grades will count toward your final grade.

Check your calendar. If a deadline falls on a religious holiday or the day of a crucial extra-curricular event that you must participate in, consult Professor Thal within the first two weeks of the semester to make alternative arrangements.

Papers should be turned in at the beginning of the class during which they are due. This will allow you to devote your attention to the new material presented during class that day. It will also help us keep papers organized, making it easier for us to provide helpful feedback to you in a timely manner.

We strongly recommend that you plan on completing all seven graded elements to the best of your ability. That way, an unexpected emergency will be less likely to cause severe difficulties. If a family or personal emergency does arise, please notify us before the relevant deadline.

Accommodation of Special Needs

Please let Professor Thal know – preferably during the first two weeks of class – if you have a documented disability and need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to fully participate. I will try to maintain the confidentiality of the information you share with me. If you have (or think you might have) such special requirements, you are encouraged to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 905 University Avenue (3-2741) with questions about campus disability related policies and services.

A Note on Japanese Names

In Japanese, family names are written first, given names second. Therefore Ihara Saikaku is the name of a man belonging to the Ihara family.

Unfortunately, when the names of these people are written in English, they are sometimes left in the original order and sometimes modified to reflect English usage: family name last. There is no way to tell the difference unless you know Japanese. To make matters even more confusing, very famous people are sometimes referred to by their given name – e.g., Saikaku. In order to refer to people correctly, please listen closely in class or ask for clarification. In some cases, the family name of a person will be printed in all capitals.

Required Texts

The following books are available for sale at the University Bookstore and at Underground Textbooks:

TAKEDA Izumo. *Chushingura (Treasury of Loyal Retainers): A Puppet Play*.
Translated by Donald Keene. Columbia University Press, 1997. ISBN:
0231035314

KATSU Kokichi. *Musui's Story: The Autobiography of a Tokugawa Samurai*.
Translated by Teruko Craig. University of Arizona Press, 1991. ISBN:
0816512566

Yukio MISHIMA. *Patriotism*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Sargent. New
Directions Publishing Corporation, 1995. ISBN: 0811213129

A course reader – available in three volumes – is available at the L&S Copy Center on the first floor of the Humanities Building.

Please bring the relevant volume of the course reader to class with you every day. There is only one copy of the reader on reserve at College Library, so only one person will be able to bring it to class on any given day.

Jan. 23 (T) – Studying the Ways of the Samurai

WARRIOR RULE: How did warriors gain control in Japan?

Jan. 25 (Th) – Courtly Culture: Before the Samurai

Reader:

Poems of the Border Guards from the *Man'yōshū*

Excerpts from Confucius, *The Analects*

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“Introduction” to *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2 on Heian Japan

Jan. 30 (T) – Dual Government: Warriors and the Imperial Court

Reader:

Chapter 11 of the *Tale of the Heike*, translated by Helen Craig McCullough – especially sections 11.7-11.9

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“Introduction” by Helen Craig McCullough” to the *Tale of the Heike*

Conrad Totman, *A History of Japan*, pp. 92-112

Feb. 1 (Th) – Buddhism and the Life of a Warrior

Reader:

Oyler, “The *Heike monogatari* and Narrating the Genpei War”
Book One, section 1:1 and Book 9 of *The Tales of the Heike*,
translated by Burton Watson – especially section 9:16

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“Chapter 15: The Introduction of Buddhism” in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*

“The Medieval Age: Despair, Deliverance, and Destiny,” in
Sources of Japanese Tradition

Conlan, “Introduction” and “Chapter One: Portrait of a Warrior”

Feb. 6 (T) – Of Gods and Guerillas

Reader:

“Introduction” by Helen Craig McCullough to *The Taiheiki*

“Chronicle of Great Peace (Taiheiki), sections on Kusunoki Masahige (in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*)

Kitabatake Chikafusa: *Chronicle of the Direct Descent of Gods and Sovereigns*, introductory sections (in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*)

Section on Emperor Godaigo in Kitabatake Chikafusa, *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns*, translated by H. Paul Varley

While reading – focus on depictions of Kusunoki Masashige. What can these sources tell us about him?

Feb. 8 (Th) – Ashikaga Rule and the Usefulness of Zen

Reader:

“Rule by the Military Houses,” in Mason and Caiger, *A History of Japan*

“Introduction,” in Mikael S. Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*

While reading these first two items: Read each historian’s interpretation carefully.

- When does this author suggest that military rule began?
- How does he define military rule?
- How would your view of Japanese history differ depending on which interpretation you accept?
- How might your view of our world today differ depending on which interpretation you accept?

“Chapter 14: Zen Buddhism” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, including Musô Sôseki’s “Sermon at the Dedication of Tenryû-ji Dharma Hall”

Aage Marcus, “The Ox-herding pictures”

Feb. 13 (T) – Wisdom from the Warring States

Reader:

Asakura Toshikage, “The Asakura House Law”

Takeda Nobushige, “Opinions in Ninety-Nine Articles”

Feb. 15 (Th) – Strategies for Tokugawa Dominance

Reader:

“Unification by Toyotomi Hideyoshi,” including “Collection of Swords” (1588)

“Tokugawa: Era of Peace,” including “Oath of Fealty” (1611), “Laws of Military Households” (1615), and “Amendments of Kanei to Buke Shohatto” (1635)

WAY(S) FOR THE ELITE: What did warrior rule mean for the social values and priorities of samurai?

Feb. 20 (T) - Studying Martial and Administrative Arts

GROUP EXERCISE DUE

Reader:

“Sun Wu as a Historical Person” and Chapters 1-4 from *Sun-tzu: The Art of Warfare*

“Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucian Program”

Feb. 22 (Th) – Zen and the Sword

Reader:

William Scott Wilson, “Introduction”

Takuan Sôhō, “The Mysterious Record of Immovable Wisdom”

Victor Harris, “Concerning the Life of Miyamoto Musashi”

Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings*, Introduction and the Ground Book

Feb. 27 (T) – What is *the* Way of the Samurai?

Reader:

“The Rediscovery of Confucianism” and “Yamaga Sokô and the Origins of Bushidô,” including Yamaga’s *The Way of the Samurai*

Mar. 1 (Th) – The Forty-Seven Rônin: Criminals or Heroes?

Reader:

“The Forty-Seven Samurai: An Eyewitness Account, with Arguments”

While reading, think about the following:

Do *you* think the forty-seven were criminals or heroes? Why?

What were the reasons/logic on both sides of the debate in the 18th century? How different or similar were those reasons to our logic today? Why?

Mar. 6 (T) – Lessons of the Akô Incident

Reader:

William Scott Wilson, “The Writer” (about Daidôji Yûzan)

Daidôji Yûzan, *Budô Shoshinshû*, sections 1-6 and 53-56

William Scott Wilson, “Introduction” to *Hagakure*

Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure*, excerpts from the 1st Chapter

Mar. 8 (Th) – Ways of the Samurai: Ideals or History?

SENTENCE OUTLINE DUE (Bring two copies of the outline to class)

Topic: How did ideals for samurai behavior change (or not change) from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries? Did the language that writers used to promote those ideals change over time? Why or why not?

IMPORTANT: Answer by comparing *either* Takuan Sôhō’s or Miyamoto Musashi’s text from the seventeenth century to *either* Yamamoto Tsunetomo’s or Daidôji Yûzan’s text from the eighteenth century. Explain similarities and differences with reference to the historical context and perspective of each author, including how the historical context changed during the intervening years.

DEPICTING SAMURAI: What did samurai rule mean for the social values and attitudes of the non-elite – townsmen and lower samurai?

Mar. 13 (T) – Ninja and Samurai in Popular Culture

REVISED SENTENCE OUTLINE, ESSAY, AND SELF-EVALUATION DUE

Reader:

Caryl Ann Callahan, “Ihara Saikaku” and “Saikaku’s Collections of Samurai Tales”

Ihara Saikaku, “Umbrellas in an Ill Wind that Blew Their Lives to Shreds,” “The Midô Drum is Beaten – So Too the Enemy,” “At Least He Wears His Youth’s Kimono,” “Far Better to Consider What She Said at the End,” and Appendix

Mar. 15 (Th) – Samurai on Stage: *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*

Reading:

Begin reading *Chûshingura: Treasury of Loyal Retainers*

Mar. 20 (T) – Status and Samurai

Reading:

Finish reading *Chûshingura*

**Print viewing in discussion section*

Mar. 22 (Th) – Lower Samurai

Reading:

Musui’s Story, entire

Reader:

Lu, “The End of the Tokugawa Rule,” Documents 1-4

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“Japan in Turmoil,” in Walthall, *Japan*

Mar. 27 (T) – Looking Back

SENTENCE OUTLINE DUE

Topic: What images and information most influenced Katsu’s depiction of himself? How did they affect his narrative? Why were these influences stronger than other possible influences?

Consider influences from popular media (such as puppet plays, stories, or prints) and samurai-directed teachings (such as *Hagakure*, *Budô Shôshinshû*, *Book of Five Rings*, and Takuan Sôhō’s letters) as well as the trends and events of Katsu’s own time.

Mar. 29 (Th) – **REVISED SENTENCE OUTLINE, ESSAY, AND SELF-EVALUATION DUE**

SPRING BREAK

WAY(S) FOR JAPAN: What prompted changes in the status of and attitudes toward samurai in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

Apr. 10 (T) – Expel the Barbarians! Revere the Emperor!

How much of a crisis is necessary to prompt change? (c.f. global warming?)

Reader:

“The Debate over Seclusion and Restoration,” including excerpts from Aizawa Seishisai, *New Proposals* and excerpts from Yoshida Shōin’s writings

Apr. 12 (Th) – The Meiji Restoration: In the Name of the Emperor

Reader:

“Excerpts from the Document on the Form of Government,” especially the first article (also known as the “Charter Oath”)

Yamagata Aritomo, “Opinion on Military Affairs and Conscription”

Itagaki Taisuke, “Memorial on the Establishment of a Representative Assembly”

Saigō Takamori, letters to Itagaki on the Korean Question

Ōkubo Toshimichi, Reasons for Opposing the Korean Expedition

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“Revolution from Above,” in Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*

Apr. 17 (T) – Transformation of the Way(s)

Reader:

Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Encouragement of Learning* – sections on “The Importance of National Laws” and “The Falsity of the Idea of Moral Subordination”

Itō Hirobumi, “Commentaries on Constitutional Provisions Relating to the Emperor’s Position”

The Imperial Rescript on Education

Basil Hall Chamberlain, “The Invention of a New Religion”

Apr. 19 (Th) – Explaining Japan

Reader:

Nitobe Inazō, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, excerpts

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“Korea and the Sino-Japanese War” from Duus, *Modern Japan* (may be appended to the back of “Revolution from Above,” see April 17)

Apr. 24 (T) – Bushidô at War

Reader:

“Kokutai” in *Concise Dictionary of Modern Japanese History*
 “Fundamentals of Our National Polity”

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“The Rise of Militarism,” in *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*

Apr. 26 (Th) – The Power of Questions, or, Have You Stopped Beating Your Wife Yet?

SENTENCE OUTLINE DUE

You are now a historian. As a historian – that is, using the skills of historical analysis – respond to *one* of the following questions:

- 1) What is bushido?
- 2) Why are the Japanese such a militaristic and violent people?

WAY(S) FOR INDIVIDUALS: Why have people glamorized samurai after World War Two, and what does this tell us about our society?

May 1 (T) – Demilitarizing Japan

REVISED SENTENCE OUTLINE, ESSAY, AND SELF-EVALUATION DUE

Recommended (E-Reserves):

“Occupied Japan,” in Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*

May 2 (W) – 6:00 p.m. showing: Kurosawa Akira, *Seven Samurai* (1954) – 160 minutes

May 3 (Th) – Warriors for the New Japan

Come to class having recently viewed *Seven Samurai*.

May 8 (T) – Romancing the Sword

Reading:

Mishima, *Patriotism*, entire

Reader:

Kathryn Sparling, “Translator’s Note”

Mishima Yukio, “*Hagakure* and I,” “*Hagakure* is Alive Today,”
 and “The Japanese Image of Death”

While reading: How does Mishima change the emphasis of *Hagakure* for his own purposes? Why?

May 9 (W) – 6:00 p.m. showing: Edward Zwick, *The Last Samurai* (2003) – 130 minutes

May 10 (Th) – American Samurai

SELF-EVALUATION OF ON-LINE DISCUSSION DUE

Come to class having recently viewed *The Last Samurai*.

May 16 (W) – **FINAL PAPER AND SELF-EVALUATION DUE BY NOON** in Professor Thal's mailbox, Humanities Box 4035

Topic: Read, watch, or play at least one samurai-related work that has not been covered in this class. (Possibilities include books, films, and video games. See Professor Thal for approval of other works.)

Analyze the work(s) as an historian. How did the author/director/artist portray samurai? Why did he or she do so in this way, at this time, for this audience? What were/are the ramifications of this portrayal? How is this portrayal related to material covered in class? What does your analysis tell us about the author/director and his or her times? Why might your analysis be important or useful today? If you are focusing on more than one work (for instance, looking at how Kurosawa's portrayal of samurai changed over time), address these issues for both works, and compare and contrast the works and their contexts to each other.