

# HISTORY 108

## PREMODERN JAPAN

(FALL 2010, MWF 9:10-10:00, BT 206)

Prof. Gerald Figal

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### Course manifesto

As an introduction to Japanese civilization from earliest times to the late 19th century, this course will be organized around the broad categories of “culture” and “politics” as manifested in aristocratic, warrior, and commoner life. Within this framework we will survey the ways in which Japanese have over the centuries organized themselves collectively, created meanings for private and social existence, and given expression to thoughts and feelings in physical and mental spaces. We will examine these expressions of Japanese cultural history through myths, religious texts, literature, architecture, pictorial art, and other cultural artifacts.

### Course materials (all required)

Smits, *Topics in Japanese Cultural History* (online at <http://figal-sensei.org/hist108/Textbook/>)

McCullough, *Genji & Heike* (GH)

Statler, *Japanese Inn* (JI)

Kamo-no-Chômei, *Hôjôki: Visions of a Torn World*

Basho, *The Narrow Road to Oku*

Keene, *Chûshingura*

*Electronic Readings* (ER): downloadable via the online syllabus at

<http://figal-sensei.org/hist108/Text/lectures.html>

There will also be required in-class and out-of-class **films** and **web sites** to view.

### Course work

**1 Map Quiz** covering basic terms and territory. 5%

**1 Midterm Exam** consisting of in-class keywords quiz and take-home essay responses. 25%

**1 Endterm Exam** (keywords & essays) focusing on but not limited to post-midterm material. 30%

**3 Think Pieces** are short writings linked to readings and visual materials. 10% each x 3 = 30%

**Attendance and class participation**, while only 10% of final grade, is crucial for success in this course since exams will include material available only from my invaluable unique lecture performances. I look unkindly upon tardiness and will do my best to embarrass you into punctuality. I reserve the right to administer unannounced diagnostic tests if it becomes apparent that course material preparation is lacking.

## Course expectations

First and foremost, I believe in enjoying the pursuit of knowledge, in having fun with thoughts, in being interested in learning about something for its own sake and not for the sake of a grade. (For better or for worse, however, we live in a world of measured performance and not one of pure joy and knowledge so I am ultimately compelled to give you grades.) Whether or not you share my belief in joy through knowledge, I do expect everybody to put out their best effort. If you are not motivated and serious about reading, writing, and talking about Japanese history, then *sayonara!*; if you are motivated and serious, then hang around. I would much rather conduct the class in a spirit of intellectual camaraderie and with a mutual commitment to excellence rather than through unilateral threats of failure. You and I will get as much out of this course as we put in to it; no more, no less. I pledge my full effort; it's up to you to pledge yours. It is my sincere hope that you all will get a lot more from this course than you expected when you signed up for it.

This course involves substantial reading and some writing since these activities are time-tested means to thoughtful inquiry and learning. You will also be asked to do some web-based work with visual documents. Ultimately, the grades you earn via the exams, Think Pieces, and participation are a measure of the depths you plumb and the care you take in this inquiry and learning. The reading you do should be active—do it with pen in hand, taking notes and asking questions along the way. Highlighting text in neon colors looks cool and can even be helpful, but it tends to be passive so don't rely solely on it to master the material. **Compiling a list of keywords as you encounter them in your reading and in lectures is a good idea.** Not only are keyword responses part of exams; they also can form building blocks for essays as well.

Other things to note: “Deadline extensions” (slackers beware!) and “make-up exams” generally do not exist in my universe. Exceptions to this cosmology can only be made for valid reasons on a case-by-case basis, but you must plead your case well before the fact (tampering with the structure of my universe can be catastrophic). I will determine what is valid as well as what grade-lowering such an exception will cost you. I will tell you right now that such cases as “the computer ate my file” or “my best friend is in town” or “I just fell in love and can't think straight” or “I just broke up with my boy/girlfriend and I can't think straight” or “I have to party until 3AM, puke my guts out, and stay in bed all day with a hangover” are not considered valid. Be sure to examine the syllabus for the schedule of work and make your semester plans accordingly. Always bring the syllabus to class; it is your Global Positioning Satellite to my universe.

Finally, I expect you all to do your own best work, not that which is kidnapped from others or “cleverly” nabbed from the Web (I have been known to track down the sources of suspicious work so don't even think about it—I had to send one person guilty of such activity to the Honor Council, whose judgment was far harsher than mine). This means zero tolerance for plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any sort. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism or how to cite sources properly, consult me. I would also strongly recommend that you invest in a writing style guide such as *The Elements of Style* (Strunk & White) and a citation form guide such as *A Pocket Style Manual* (Hacker).

**Vanderbilt University's Honor Code governs all work in this course.**

## Trajectory

(subject to deviations)

### Unit 1: Early formations of Japanese civilization to the 8th century

<b>Week 1:</b>		<b>Defining “Japan” and its history</b>
topics:	W.	Japan’s prehistorical past
	F.	Discussion of <i>Kojiki</i>
readings:	W.	<i>Topics</i> , Introduction & Chapter One
	F.	Electronic Readings (ER): “Accounts of the Eastern Barbarians” & <i>Kojiki</i>
<b>Week 2:</b>		<b>The formation of early Japanese civilization</b>
topics:	M.	“Indigenous” foundations
	W.	Continental impact
	F.	The Taika Reform & institutional revolution
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Two
		ER: “Eternal Change at the Grand Shrine of Ise”
task:		<b>View “A Tour of Ise Shrine” online for Monday</b> (at: <a href="http://figal-sensei.org/hist108/Text/ev1intro.html">http://figal-sensei.org/hist108/Text/ev1intro.html</a> )
<b>Week 3:</b>		<b>Consolidating the state and imperial rule</b>
topics:	M.	The faces of Nara, part 1
	W.	The faces of Nara, part 2
	F.	<b>MAP QUIZ</b> ; Discussion of <i>The Ten Thousand Leaves</i>
readings:	W:	ER: <i>The Ten Thousand Leaves</i>

### Unit 2: Aristocrats in style, 8th to 12th centuries

<b>Week 4:</b>		<b>Politics &amp; culture in Heian Japan</b>
topics:	M.	Politics and society in Heian Japan
	W.	Enter the Shining Prince (Intro to <i>The Tale of Genji</i> )
	F.	VIDEO: <i>The Illustrated Handscroll of Genji</i>
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Three (sections 1-4)
	W:	Genji & Heike, 3-83 (intro and chapters 1-3)
task:		For Wednesday make a “family tree” of relationships among the principals in <i>The Tale of Genji</i> so far.
<b>Week 5:</b>		<b>The art of life &amp; love in Heian court society</b>
topics:	M.	Courting among courtiers
	W.	The awareness of things
	F.	Discussion: The aesthetics of social relationships
readings:	M:	<i>Genji &amp; Heike</i> , 84-159
	W:	<i>Genji &amp; Heike</i> , 160-242; <i>Topics</i> , “Literature & Buddhism” section in Chapter Three
task:		<b>Think Piece 1 (due Friday)</b> ; Midterm essay questions posted

<b>Week 6:</b>		<b>Buddhist sense &amp; sensibility</b>
topics:	M.	Buddhism as moral system & fashion statement
	W.	Discussion: Buddhist morality tales
	F.	<b>MIDTERM: (Essay due at class time; keywords in class)</b>
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Four (“The Buddha” & “The Dharma”)
	W.	ER: <i>Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition</i>
task		<b>Complete Midterm essay questions; study for keywords</b>

### Unit 3: Warrior rule & medieval mentalities, 12th to 16th centuries

<b>Week 7:</b>		<b>Warrior life &amp; death</b>
topics:	M.	Civil war: The Taira & The Minamoto
	W.	Samurai family values
	F.	Discussion: The Fall of the Heike
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Five (“End of the Heian Period”); <i>Genji &amp; Heike</i> , 245-277
	W.	<i>Genji &amp; Heike</i> , 305-343
	F:	<i>Genji &amp; Heike</i> , 370-445
<b>Week 8:</b>		<b>Buddhist heavens &amp; hells</b>
topics:	M.	The six courses
	W.	Discussion: <i>Hōjōki: Visions of a Torn World</i>
	F.	<b>FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)</b>
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Four (the rest)
	W:	Kamo-no-Chōmei, <i>Hōjōki</i> (An Account of My Hut)
task:		<b>Think Piece 2 (due Wednesday)</b>
<b>Week 9:</b>		<b>Bakufu &amp; imperial court</b>
topics:	M.	The establishment of the Kamakura Bakufu
	W.	Divine winds & nostalgic emperors
	F.	Divine winds & nostalgic emperors
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Five (“The Kamakura Period”)
<b>Week 10:</b>		<b>Art &amp; Zen</b>
topics:	M.	The Ashikaga and the arts
	W.	Everything Zen
	F.	VIDEO: Excerpts of Nō performance
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Five (the rest)
	W:	ER: “Rational Zen”; “Fukanzazengi: How Everyone Can Sit”
	F:	ER: “Seami and the Art of the Nō,” & “Atsumori”

## Unit 4: The Tokugawa peace and commoner culture, 17th to 19th centuries

<b>Week 11:</b>		<b>Warring states &amp; reunification</b>
topics:	M.	Warring states and the road to reunification I
	W.	Road to reunification II
	F.	Control, Class, and Status under the Tokugawa Shōgunate
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Six (sections 1 & 2); <i>Japanese Inn</i> , chpts. 1-3 ER: “Hideyoshi’s Letters & Edicts”
	F:	<i>Japanese Inn</i> , chapters 4-6
film:		<i>Kagemusha</i> (Wed. at 7PM in BT 101)
<b>Week 12:</b>		<b>Personal emotion &amp; social obligation</b>
topics:	M.	Wandering haiku
	W.	The revenge of the 47 rōnin
	F.	The revenge of the 47 rōnin
readings:	M.	<i>Japanese Inn</i> , chapter 7-9; Bashō, <i>The Narrow Road to Oku</i>
	W:	JI, chapter 10; <i>Chūshingura</i> (first half)
	F:	<i>Chūshingura</i> (last half)
film:		<i>Chūshingura</i> (Wed. at 7PM in BT 101)
task:		<b>Think Piece 3 (due Friday)</b>
<b>Week 13:</b>		<b>Chōnin vitality</b>
topics:	M.	Ukiyo as art & lifestyle
	W.	Play & pleasure in Edo, part 1
	F.	Play & pleasure in Edo, part 2
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Seven; <i>Japanese Inn</i> , chapter 11
	W.	ER: “The Tale of Gengobei, The Mountain of Love,” “The Eternal Storehouse of Japan,” “The King of Farts”
	F.	ER: Kyōden, “Grilled and Basted Edo-Born Playboy”
		<b>(Thanksgiving)</b>
<b>Week 14:</b>		<b>End of the old order</b>
topics:	M.	Domestic crisis & external threats
	W.	Domestic crisis & external threats
	F.	Discussion: <i>Twilight Samurai</i>
readings:	M:	<i>Topics</i> , Chapter Six (“Fall of the Bakufu”);
	F:	ER: “Discussion on Western Painting” & “The Twelve Tenets of the Dutch Studies Academy”
film:		<i>Twilight Samurai</i> (Wed. at 7PM in BT 101)
<b>Week 15:</b>		<b>Dawn of the new order</b>
discussion:	M.	The Meaning of the Meiji “Restoration”
	W.	What makes “Japanese civilization” “Japanese”?
readings:		Your notes from the semester; Endterm Study Guide
task:		Study for Endterm exam that is on Saturday, Dec. 11 3-5PM