HSTR 145: REINVENTING JAPAN

This course is designed to trace the political, cultural, and economic development of Japan from the earliest times to the present. Special attention will be given to Japanese relations with Asia and the West, both in the context of “cultural borrowing” and war, and how these relations shaped the emergence of the modern Japanese state. Other issues addressed in this course will be the changing role of women in Japanese society, the development of the myth of Japanese homogeneity and the “emperor system ideology,” relations with the native Ainu, the emergence of Japanese business culture, and Japan today. The goal will be to present Japan in a fresh light, one that emphasizes the diversity and contention surrounding the rise of modern Japan.

Under the new Core 2.0, this course is designated as Diversity (D). For this reason, among other overarching themes, we will explore the notion of diversity as it applies to the “most homogeneous” of all places—Japan—emphasizing how gender, ethnicity, class, history, and political philosophies shape different and often competing “Japanese” experiences. That is, this class uses diversity as an analytical tool with which to interrogate the Japanese past. Tests and written assignments will reflect this theme.

This is also an important class in the history curriculum. Basically, you will be required to become a historian in this class, and read and analyze primary texts, as well as secondary literature, and write thoughtfully about them. History is, simply put, the rendering of the past—to order a chaotic stew of traditions, convictions, abstract realities, and human memories, into a rational, and more often than not, narrative form, stressing the causal relations between thought, culture, environment, and human events. This is a highly creative task, to be sure, but one which is bolstered by the authority inherent in basing historical observations in the sources.

Required readings (available for purchase in the MSU bookstore).
Short documentaries:

“Secret Empire”
“Meiji, Asia’s Response to the West”
“The Japanese Version”

Classroom conduct: Turn cell phones off. No video or audio recording of any kind without permission. Any form of cheating or plagiarism will be met with intense displeasure and, most likely, a failing grade in the course and a formal report to the Dean of Students. For the Student Conduct Code, see: http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/.

Course requirements (all assignments must be turned in to pass this course):
Midterm examination (20%); two papers (20% each); recitation grade and discussion (10%); final examination (30%). No late assignments accepted.

Lecture schedule:
WEEK ONE: Getting started
8/28: Introduction
8/30: Prehistoric civilization: Pottery, tombs, and mirrors of authority early kingship
   Required reading: Japan, xi-7.

WEEK TWO: The Riddle Age
9/04: Early kingship
9/06: Continental models and Nara period
   Required reading: Japan, 8-29; The Diary of Lady Murasaki, xii-29.

WEEK THREE: Early State Development
9/11: Heian period
9/13: Heian culture (discussion of The Diary of Lady Murasaki)
   Required reading: Japan, 30-45; The Diary of Lady Murasaki, entire.

WEEK FOUR: Classical Age
9/18: The rise of warrior power
9/20: Emperor Kenmu’s “revolution”
   Required reading: Japan, 46-71; Essays in Idleness, xvii-64.

WEEK FIVE: Medieval Age
9/25: Medieval lives, religions, and cultures
9/27: Era of the Warring States
   Required reading: Essays in Idleness, entire.

WEEK SIX: Age of Unification
10/02: “Overspread the Realm with Military Might”
10/04: Hideyoshi
   Required reading: Japan, 72-93.
WEEK SEVEN: The New Order
10/09: Early modern politics
10/11: Early modern orthodoxies and Christianity
Required reading: Chushingura, 1-180.

WEEK EIGHT: Early Modernity
10/16: Industrious revolutions
10/18: Mid-term examination
Required reading: Japan, 94-119.

WEEK NINE: Imperial Restoration
10/23: Restorationism
10/25: Tokugawa collapse
Required reading: Our Land Was a Forest, entire.

WEEK TEN: Legacies
10/30: Documentary: “Secret Empire”
11/01: Documentary: “Meiji, Asia’s Response to the West”
Required reading: Japan, 120-53.

WEEK ELEVEN: Meiji Revolutions
11/06: No class: Election Day
11/08: Meiji Restoration

WEEK TWELVE: War and Empire
11/13: Empire building
11/15: The Pacific War

WEEK THIRTEEN: Occupation
11/20: Occupied Japan
11/22: No class: Thanksgiving Holiday
Required reading: Japan, 154-81.

WEEK FOURTEEN: Aftermath
11/27: Postwar Japan
11/29: Economic miracles
Required reading: Japan, 182-98.

WEEK FIFTEEN: Postwar Japan
12/06: Pollution, tsunamis, and the future of Japan
Required reading: *Japan*, 199-213.

FINAL EXAMINATION: Ganbatte!
Our final examination is scheduled for 4:00-5:50, Wed. (12/12). Bring a bluebook.