

Instructors

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HSTR 340: AGE OF THE SHOGUNS

(TTh 3:05-4:20 JONH 346)

This course explores what I believe to be the most important period in Japanese history, the early modern period (c. 1590-1868) or the height of shogunal government under the Tokugawa family.



In the world of politics, the early modern period represented a transitional stage, from a feudal polity to a more modern one, where a “centering” state increasingly wielded political power. In the world of identity formation, nationalism, and international relations, it was a period when the shogun expelled Christian missionaries and strictly regulated foreign contact. Some call this the fostering of a “closed country consciousness,” while others illustrate how Japanese positioned foreigners—such as the Ainu of the northern island of Ezo—as carefully controlled “Others” to create a sense of Japanese “Self,” a trend that translated into an early modern identity. But even with such “Others” inhabiting the northern borderlands, the Japanese pursued economic opportunities and pushed into this poorly defined region and radically redefined the islands that we today call “Japanese.”

But the economy and certain sciences also flourished in the early modern period. It was a time that witnessed the construction of some of the largest cities in the world, cities where the urbane flourished alongside thriving markets, changing the country’s economy into a “proto-industrial” one. Herein we see the birth of what remains one of the most powerful economies in the world. Simultaneously, the early modern period saw important shifts in the ways most people viewed the world around them, from changes in scientific and medical philosophies due to the importation of Confucianism and, later, “Western learning,” to the ways in which the world was categorized and organized and mapped. Technological change was salient as well: devices such as ground lenses and astrolabes altered the very means by which Japanese gazed upon their internal and external worlds.



In other words, a good case can be made—and we will indeed make this case—that the country we recognize today as Japan was born in the early modern period: this course investigates this birthing process.

Required readings

Ihara, *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings*

Keene, trans. *Chûshingura*

De Bary, comp. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*

Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*

Required films

“Rikyû” (Teshigahara Hiroshi, Director)

“Double Suicide” (Shinoda Masahiro, Director)

Course requirements (all assignments must be completed on time to pass this course)

First paper assignment (20%)

Second paper assignment (20%)

Third paper assignment (20%)

Final examination (25%)

Discussion/film attendance (15%)

Lecture schedule

WEEK ONE: Introduction

01/09 Introduction: Historicizing “early modernity”

WEEK TWO: Warring States

01/14 The Warring States milieu

01/16 “Overspread the realm with military might”

Required readings: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 1-27.

WEEK THREE: Hideyoshi

01/21: The “bald rat” general

01/23: The wars of the “three countries”

Required readings: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 28-103.

WEEK FOUR: Enter Ieyasu

01/28 *Taikô kenchi* and the domain legacy

01/30 Ieyasu and “centering” the state

Required readings: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 103-126.

WEEK FIVE: The Realm Smells of Gunpowder

02/04 View: "Rikyû" (Director, Teshigahara Hiroshi)

02/06 Discussion of "Rikyû" and Hideyoshi's rule*

Required readings: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 127-157.

WEEK SIX: Orthodoxies in Tokugawa rule

02/11 Neo-Confucianism

02/13 Discussion: Primary documents in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*Required readings: *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 1-72

WEEK SEVEN: Iberian encounters

02/18 Christianity's conundrum

02/20 Diplomacy and legitimacy

Required readings: *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 73-154.

WEEK EIGHT: Maritime Prohibitions

02/25 Visions of foreigners

02/27 Shakushain's War

Required readings: *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 155-235.

WEEK NINE: Northern Boundaries

03/04 Looking Northward

03/06 No class

Required readings: *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, 3-54 and 121-187.

SPRING BREAK 03/10-03/14

WEEK TEN: Urban Lives

03/18 All Roads lead to Edo

03/20 Sex lives and the "pleasure quarters"

Required readings: *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, 211-234.

WEEK ELEVEN: Affluence and Desire

03/25 View: "Double Suicide" (Director, Shinoda Masahiro)

03/27 Discussion of "Double Suicide" and urban culture*

Required readings: *Chûshingura*, entire.

WEEK TWELVE: Public Economies and Obedience

04/01 The "late modernizer" paradigm and its chronologies

04/03 The Akô Incident

Required readings: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, (on Akô) 353-393.

WEEK THIRTEEN: Cracks in the Foundation

04/08 Decay of the “moral economy”

04/10 Discussion of *Chûshingura* and *Sources of Japanese Tradition**

Required readings: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 289-313.

WEEK FOURTEEN: Incipient Nationalisms

04/15 *Kokugaku* nativism

04/17 Wang Yangmingism

Required readings: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 394-431, 518-565.

WEEK FIFTEEN: Collapse

04/22 Tokugawa Collapse

04/24 Course Review*

Required readings:

FINAL EXAMINATIONS: Ganbatte!

Our required final examination is scheduled for Monday, April 28 2:00-3:50.

*Brett out of town.