

History 396, Spring 2010: **Samurai in Film.**

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General

Japan's *samurai* warriors were one of the distinct elements of pre-20th Japanese society, culture, and government. They are still with us as a ready-reference in a number of contexts: anime samurai from outer space; samurai businessman; Tom Cruise's "Last Samurai;" the samurai spirit that infuses the martial arts; and Pacific War practitioners of the samurai ethos of *bushido* -self-immolation (*hara-kiri*, or *hari-kari* in English use), death before defeat, self-sacrifice, and *kamikaze*.

Historically, the samurai class, which existed for nearly 1000 years (900s to late 1800s), was not a monolithic entity, and its composition changed over time. For the vast bulk of this time Japan was at peace, and warriors only rarely died fighting. The political position of the warrior class changed over time, from being local land managers in the 900s to being a national governing elite after 1600. The social composition of the warrior class also changed: through the late 1300s they came generally from hereditary families; from the mid-1400s through the late 1500s they were drawn from almost any social background, and after 1600 they were mostly hereditary bureaucrats. This class will focus on the medieval era, when they were most involved in warfare.

Samurai as they are recalled in film reflect not just the "historical samurai." The choice of samurai type in films has also been influenced by concerns, social criticisms, valorizations, and the formation of historical memory. That is, when we see samurai, we sometimes see something of the shifting cultural and political currents of modern Japan (as well as entertainment!). Thus, the course will present different opportunities for learning about the samurai.

Course Structure.

The course combines lectures, films, and readings. In addition some film synopses which outline the main theme and provide additional historical context will be available on Blackboard.

Expected workload.

In order to satisfactorily complete the course, in addition to attendance at class, students should plan on allocating up to ten hours per week for completing reading assignments and to reviewing films. In my own experience, preparing a good film report can entail viewing a film at least three times, in order to clarify details.

Evaluation.

1/ Attendance is required (10% of course grade).

2/ **All written assignments are to be double spaced, 12-point, Melior or Times New Roman font, and printed on only one side of the page.**

3/ First quiz **4/21** (15% of course grade).

4/ A 1300-word exploration of Conlan's *State of War* (20% of course grade).

Due no later than **5/05**.

5/ Second quiz **5/12** (15% of course grade).

6/ Film report, 4-5 pages (worth 20% course grade). The report must deal with a film shown **between 4/07 and 5/19**, and is **due no later than 5/26**. The film report is to focus on themes relating to samurai and war, and is **not** a film review.

7/ Third quiz **6/02** (20% of course grade). While all material is potentially examinable, most weight will be placed on material covered since the first quiz.

8/ **Failure to pass the third quiz is an automatic fail for the entire course.**

9. Study guides will be provided for the quizzes.

Assigned Texts. Thomas Conlan, *State of War*.
Pierre Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down*.

Additional Readings. All potentially examinable. They are available on Blackboard.

Classroom Protocol.

The classroom is a collective learning environment.

I-pods, cell-phones, texting etc: to be turned to silent mode, not used etc. For emergencies and family health matters, it's OK to leave the room and take a call.

Lap-tops and similar: to be used only for taking notes. Please sit in the front rows. If it appears that they are being used for non-class-related reasons, or to amuse or distract others, we will ask you to turn them off.

Food: The classroom is not a theater or a dining hall. Digestion sounds, food aromas, candy wrappers, etc, are all distracting. Please eat dinner outside class.

Please arrive on time. This is especially important for quizzes, since we do not allow extra time for completion if you are late.

ANTICIPATED LECTURE, FILM, AND READING SCHEDULE.

WEEK ONE 3/31 Introduction.

Mimi nashi Hōichi no hanashi 耳無し芳一の話 (**Hōichi the Earless**) [in, *Kwaidan* 怪談 (**Ghost Stories**) (DVD 01058; 60 mins.).

Reading: Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapters 1, 2, 5.
Conlan, *State of War*, chapter 6.

WEEK TWO 4/07. Lecture: The Warrior Rise to Power.

Lecture: Images of Violence: The *Scroll of the Heiji Rebellion.*

Jigokumon 地獄門 (**Gate of Hell**). (VT 06342; VT 00437; 86 mins.).

Reading: Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

WEEK THREE 4/14. Lecture: Kamakura, the First Warrior Government.

Lecture: Warrior Thinkers: Yasutoki and Shigetoki.

Lecture: Warrior Badboys: The *Scroll of the Mongol Invasions.*

Reading: Conlan, *State of War*, chapters 1 and 3.

Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapters 4, 6

C. Steenstrup, "The Gokurakuji Letter: Hōjō Shigetoki's Compendium of Political and Religious Ideas of Thirteenth Century Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 32.1 (Spring 1977), pp. 1-34.

WEEK FOUR 4/21. First quiz.

Lecture: Fourteenth Century Warfare.

Onibaba 鬼婆 (**The Ogress**). (VT 05493; 104 mins.).

Reading: Conlan, *State of War*, chapters 1, 3, 6.

Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapters 5, 7.

A. Goble, "War and Injury: The Emergence of Wound Medicine in Medieval Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 60.3 (Autumn 2005), pp. 297-338.

WEEK FIVE 4/28. Lecture: Social Status and Social Flux.

Shichinin no samurai 七人の侍 (**The Seven Samurai**). (DVD 03041) (203 mins.).

Reading: Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapters 10 and 11.

Conlan, *State of War*, chapter 4.

C. Steenstrup, "The Imagawa Letter: A Muromachi Warrior's Code of Conduct Which Became a Tokugawa Schoolbook," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 28.3 (Autumn 1973), pp. 295-316.

History 396, Spring 2010: **Samurai in Film.**

WEEK SIX 5/05 **Review of Conlan due.**
continuing *Shichinin no samurai* (**The Seven Samurai**).
Lecture: Warrior Loyalty and Ethics.

Reading: Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapters 10 and 11.
Conlan, *State of War*, chapter 4.

WEEK SEVEN 5/12. Second quiz.

Kakushi toride no san akunin 隠し砦の三悪人 (**Hidden Fortress**).
(DVD 01011; 143 mins.).

Reading: Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapters 9, 10, 12
Conlan, *State of War*, chapters 5, 7, and 8.
C. Steenstrup, "The Imagawa Letter: A Muromachi Warrior's Code of
Conduct Which Became a Tokugawa Schoolbook," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 28.3
(Autumn 1973), pp. 295-316.

WEEK EIGHT 5/19. Lecture: Organization and Warlords: the Takeda.

Ten to chi to 天と地と (**Heaven and Earth**). (VT 06718, 104 mins.).
Reading: Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapter 12.
Conlan, *State of War*, chapters 7 and 8.
C. Steenstrup, "Hōjō Sōun's Twenty-One Articles: The Code of Conduct
of the Odawara Hōjō," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 29.3 (Autumn 1974), pp. 283-303.

WEEK NINE 5/26. Film report due.

Lecture: The End of War: Reshaping the Samurai.
Harakiri 切腹 (**Ritual Suicide**). (VT 06739; 134 mins.).
Reading: Souyri, *World Turned Upside Down*, chapter 12.
Conlan, *State of War*, chapter 8.

WEEK TEN 6/02. Third quiz.

Kozure ōkami: Sanzu no kawa no Uba guruma 子連れ狼: 三途の川の乳母車 (**Lone Wolf and Cub: Baby Cart at the River Styx**) (DVD 01711; 81 mins.).

HIST 393– SAMURAI IN FILM

GUIDE FOR FILM REPORT AND BOOK EXPLORATION

Film Report.

There are several ways in which you can craft a film report. In this course, the emphasis is on your writing a report that demonstrates clear familiarity with the film; and that you have reflected on some of the themes or issues relating to samurai and warfare. Please remember that the class is not one on film or film history; and that the film report is **NOT** a film review that deals with directors, cinema technique, and suchlike. If it reads like a film review rather than something written for this course, then you may easily achieve an “F” grade.

The report could emphasize a particular theme that comes through in the film, or even a couple of themes. You could also reflect upon the film and discuss issues that occurred to you. We will address some possibilities in class.

The **least desirable** film report, which being such is not to be submitted (and if so might well earn a grade of “F”) is one that provides a synopsis of the film – after all, we’ve all seen it.

Feel free to inform your report with ideas and general information that you may have encountered in the readings, although this is not required in order to write a successful report.

Book exploration of Conlan, *State of War*.

This book exploration will be a different effort than a film report.

It **is acceptable** to provide a general overview of the book, but one that is thoughtful and not simply a recapitulation of the chapters. You could also focus your efforts on a couple of themes in which you might have a particular interest, such as: loyalty and the warrior ethos, social organization of warrior society, weapons and tactics, and warfare and violence.

We will also address the book exploration in class.