This course examines the origins of Japanese civilization and surveys the classical, medieval, and early modern periods. From the emergence of a court-centered state through the rise and fall of a warrior-dominated society, Japan’s premodern history is explored through a focus on political, social, cultural, and intellectual developments. Early interactions with Asia and the West will be considered as a means of questioning the “opening” of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century. Enrollment Limit: 45.

**Required texts:** Required texts have been ordered in paperback at the Oberlin Bookstore (basement) as well as placed on reserve at Mudd Library.


**Recommended text:**


All other readings are available on Blackboard.

**ASSESSMENT:**
The course grade will be based on the following:

- Mid-term (hour) exam: 20%
- Short papers: 20% each
- Final exam: 25%
- Attendance/Participation: 15%

**EXAMS:** The *Midterm Examination*, covering the lectures and all assigned readings to date will be given in class on **Monday, Oct. 5.** The *Final Examination* is scheduled for **Thursday, Dec. 17** from 7-9pm.

**PAPERS:** Students will write two 4–6 page essays, due **in class** on **Friday, Nov. 6,** and **Monday, Dec. 7.**
ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:
- Lectures are an integral part of the course, and attendance is mandatory.
- Students are expected to complete all readings and be prepared to discuss in class.
- Each week, students will be required to post one question (concerning the readings) on the online discussion board in Blackboard by Thursday, 10pm.

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS: Students will complete two 2-page writing assignments. The first will analyze a primary document and be due in class on Monday, Sept. 21; the second will focus on an object from visual culture and be due on Monday, Nov. 23. Details to be explained in class.

Assignments are due on (or before) the due date noted in the syllabus. Only one extension will be granted per semester and must be requested during office hours at least 2 days before the due date of the paper. (Note: Requests for extensions may not be granted in all cases.) Late assignments will be reduced by one grade step per day. A paper due on Friday, November 6 which is turned in on Saturday, November 7, for example, will get a “B−” rather than the “B” it merited. A “B” paper turned in on Monday, November 9 will earn a “C+”, etc.

FILM SCREENINGS: Two films will be shown during the course of the semester in Wilder 101. The first, “Ran” by Director Kurosawa Akira will be screened on Tuesday, September 29 at 7pm. The second film, “Twilight Samurai” (Tasogare Seibei) by Director Yamada Yōji will be screened on Tuesday, December 1 at 7pm. Films will be discussed during lecture in conjunction with the readings for the week.

THINKING ABOUT HISTORY WITH ART: Examination of works of art from Oberlin’s Allen Memorial Art Museum will form an integral part of the course curriculum. Students will visit the museum during class hours in weeks three, six, seven, and nine for discussion of the week’s themes in the context of material objects. Students will also be given an opportunity to write one of the two required papers on a topic related to objects from the museum’s collection.

Honor Code: All students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments.

Writing Assistance: Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Center in Mudd Library where tutors from the Writing Associates Program can provide strategies for improving writing skills.

OFFICE HOURS: Students are encouraged to come see the instructor with questions about any aspect of the course:
Mondays, 2:30 – 4pm and Thursdays, 4:30 – 6pm
Rice Hall, Room 308
Phone: 5-6708 E-mail: Emer.ODwyer@oberlin.edu
LECTURE SCHEDULE:

I. PRE-MODERN TRADITIONS

Week 1: Origins

Aug. 31 (M)  Introduction and Maps
Sept. 2 (W)   Earliest Times: 11,000 to 300 B.C.E.
Sept. 4 (F)   Peopling the Archipelago

Readings:
Hall, John W., Japan from Prehistory to Modern Times, 1-23.

Primary documents: Sources of Japanese Tradition (SJT)
“History of the Kingdom of Wei, ” pp. 6-8;
“Legends concerning Shintō Deities,” pp. 19-23;

Week 2: The Early Japanese State

Sept. 7 (M)   No Class (Labor Day)
Sept. 9* (W)  Conquering the Islands: The Rise of the Yamato Kings
Sept. 11 (F)  The Asuka Enlightenment

Readings:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 25-63.

Primary documents: SJT
“The Reign of Suiko and Rule of Shōtoku,” pp 46-54;

*On Wednesday, Sept. 9, there will be a map quiz at the beginning of class.

Week 3: The Classical Age

Sept. 14 (M)  Courtier Rulership in the Heian Period (794-1185)
Sept. 16 (W)  Heian Refinements and Religions
Sept. 18 (F)  The Tale of Genji and Heian Literature (*To be held at Allen Memorial Art Museum)

Reading:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 64-117.
Primary documents: SJT
“Buddhism and the State in Nara Japan,” pp. 114-20;
“Murasaki Shikibu: On the Art of Fiction,” pp. 201-03.

[Blackboard]:

Week 4: The Rise of the Warrior Class
Sept. 21* (M)  The Rise of the Warrior Class
Sept. 23 (W)  Warrior Rulership and Kamakura Culture
Sept. 25 (F)  Civil War

Reading:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 121-43.

Primary documents:
Tales of Times Now Past, 93-101; 173-77; 184-86.

SJT:
“Medieval Uses of the Past,” pp. 250-57;
“The Jōei Code,” pp. 415-17;
“The Kenmu Code,” pp. 418-20;

*Visual Culture Assignment due in class on Monday, Sept. 21.

Week 5: Medieval Cultures
Sept. 28 (M)  No Class (Yom Kippur)
Sept. 30 (W)  The Culture of War and the Southern Barbarians
Oct. 2     (F)  Religion

Reading:
Mason & Caiger, pp. 158-70.

Primary documents: SJT
“Genshin: The Essentials of Salvation;” pp. 217-222;
“Eisai: Propagation of Zen for the Protection of the State,” pp. 311-17;
“Dōgen: How to Practice Buddhism,” pp. 319-28;  
“Keisei: A Companion in Solitude,” pp. 404-06;  

**Reminder: Screening of “Ran” by Kurosawa Akira at 7pm on Tuesday, Sept. 29.**

### Week 6: Medieval Period in the Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 5 (M)</td>
<td><strong>In-Class Midterm</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 7 (W)</td>
<td>Section #1: Allen Art Museum Visit*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 9 (F)</td>
<td>Lecture by Professor Ethan Segal, Michigan State University</td>
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</tbody>
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*Important: AMAM Museum Visit Information:*  
*Students will be assigned to one of two groups for the museum visit. (See also week #7).**  
**Students should convene at the museum at 1:30pm on their scheduled day.

**Readings:**  
Mason & Caiger, pp. 144-57.

Mason, Penelope. *History of Japanese Art*, pp. 147-48; 174-201; 211-12.


### Week 7: Towards Unification

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 12 (M)</td>
<td>Section #2: Allen Art Museum Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 14 (W)</td>
<td>The Mature Daimyo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 16 (F)</td>
<td>The Unifiers</td>
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</tbody>
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**Reading:**  
Mason & Caiger, pp. 173-89.

**Primary documents: SJT:**  

**Fall Recess**

### II. EARLY MODERN JAPAN

### Week 8: The Pax Tokugawa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 26 (M)</td>
<td>Political Unification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 28 (W)</td>
<td>The Tokugawa Polity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 30 (F)</td>
<td>The Shoguns</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Readings:**


**Primary documents:** *SJT*, Vol. 2 [Blackboard]:
“Code for the Warrior Households,” pp. 12-4;
“Code for the Imperial Court and Court Nobility,” pp. 14-8.
“Anecdotes concerning Yamazaki Ansai,” pp. 82-3.

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**Week 9: Thinking about Tokugawa-era Women with Art**

Nov. 2 (M) Section #1: Allen Art Museum Visit
Nov. 4 (W) Section #2: Allen Art Museum Visit
Nov. 6 (F) Paper #1 Due

**Readings:**


**Primary documents:**


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**Week 10: Protests and Uprisings**

Nov. 9 (M) Revolt!
Nov. 11 (W) Case Studies
Nov. 13 (F) “A Tale of a Dream from the Fox Woman Plain”

**Readings:**


**Primary document:**
**Week 11: A Closed Country? Foreign Relations in Tokugawa Japan**

Nov. 16 (M) “Sakoku”
Nov. 18 (W) The Dutch on Dejima
Nov. 20 (F) Case Study: Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716)

Readings:


Primary documents:

*SJT*, Vol. 2  **[Blackboard]**:
“Aizawa Seishisai: Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarian;” “New Theses” pp. 520-29;

**Week 12: Black Ships and Red Beards**

Nov. 23* (M) 1850s Troubles
Nov. 25 (W) Perry’s Arrival

*Visual Culture Assignment due in class on Monday, Nov. 23.*

Readings:


**Thanksgiving Recess**

**Week 13: Narrating the Restoration**

Nov. 30 (M) Who Speaks for Tokugawa Japan?
Dec. 2 (W) How to Narrate the Restoration
Dec. 4 (F) The Restoration and Modern Japan

**Reminder: Screening of “Twilight Samurai” (*Tasogare Seibei*) at 7pm on Tuesday, December 1.**

Reading:
Primary documents: *SJT*, Vol. 2 [Blackboard]

**Week 14: Assessing the Tokugawa Period**

Dec. 7* (M) Abandoning the Old, Building the New  
Dec. 9 (W) From Edo to Tokyo  
Dec. 11 (F) Japan’s Premodern and Early Modern Period in Contemporary Perspective

*Second papers are due by 4pm on Monday, Dec. 7.*

**Reading:**  

Primary documents: *SJT*, Vol. 2 [Blackboard]  

**Final Examination:** Dec. 17 (Thurs.) 7-9pm