Early Modern Japan: 1550’s-1830’s

History 187A
UCSB Winter 2010
MWF 10:00-10:50
HSSB 1174

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Office hrs: M 3-5, F 11-12

Course description and objectives

Japan underwent revolutionary change in the decades before and after the year 1600. After a century and a half of constant warfare on the islands, the Matsudaira clan produced a warlord who changed his family name to Tokugawa and came to rule the hundreds of daimyo lords of Japan. The lords remained to govern their realms but no longer could they war with each other. Most samurai were pulled out of their villages and came to live in the cities, and became dependent upon salaries granted from their lords. Villagers and townspeople had much administrative autonomy but were disarmed, and the secular political power of Buddhist institutions was violently destroyed. In this way the samurai class secured a position at the top of the polity and social hierarchy, but they were also tamed and bureaucratized, leading to one of the seeming paradoxes of the Tokugawa period: more than two centuries of military rule without a single war.

A further paradox is that within a century townspeople, not samurai, emerged as the dominant producers of culture. By the 1650's Japan had become one of the most urbanized societies in the world, and Edo (now Tokyo) became the world's largest city with one-million residents. A civilian populace increasingly produced the literature, drama, fashion and professional sports which even the samurai read and went to see. By the early 1800's Japan had become a highly literate, educated and commercialized early modern society, capable of meeting the challenges posed by the dominance of the West in the latter half of that century.

In this class we will explore the many changes of these centuries. In the first half of the course we will look at the establishment of Tokugawa and lordly rule and the nature of samurai warrior culture. During the second half we will focus on the development of the other classes and their changing roles, and ultimately the problems that their development posed for traditional institutions and governance.

We create this class together. I encourage you to ask questions or give your own comments at any point in the lecture. Your attendance at class lectures is essential and required. Much important information will be given only in lecture. You will have to write two 5-6 page essays which will be your responses to select document materials. In each essay you should tell us what you learned about something in that era from the document. The quality of the writing will affect the grade: an essay without a thesis, filled with confusing expressions, incomplete arguments, or which has not been proofread for mistakes will receive a poor grade.

Throughout this course we will practice the historian's craft of interpreting documents such as autobiography, petitions, legal precedents, and the fiction of contemporaries. Many Friday classes will be run as a discussion. You will each be required to bring a one-to-two page typed commentary on what you have learned from the week's documents. This will serve as the basis for the discussion. These pages will be graded and will account for 30% of the class grade. There will be no Midterm, and the Final exam (consisting of a map quiz, short answer questions and essays) will be cumulative. I will distribute a detailed exam study guide during the last week of class.

Requirements and Grading: Map 5% (due 1/11); Two 5 page essays (due 2/3 and 3/3) 30%; Document assignments and discussion (weekly, generally every Friday) 30%. Final exam (3/20) 35%.

Late assignment policy: I will deduct 10% from the Friday assignments not turned in during class and 3.33% per day after that. I will deduct 3.33% per day late (including Sat, Sun and holidays) from all other assignments. A paper turned in after class time is considered one day late. The next day is also considered one day late but each day ends at 5:00 PM. All late assignments must be turned in as paper copy to me directly or slid under my office door.
Required texts
Conrad Totman, Early Modern Japan
Donald Keene trans., Chûshingura: The Treasury of Loyal Retainers
Reader of articles and documents, available from Associated Students in the U Cen.
You should purchase the texts if possible, but all texts will be placed on reserve in the main library as well.

Weekly Readings and Lecture Topics

Week 1  Warring States Toward Unification

M Jan 4  Introduction and Warring States
W Jan 6  Nobunaga to Hideyoshi
F Jan 8  Hideyoshi to Ieyasu

Readings:  Totman pp. 1-58

Week 2  Unification and Edo Polity

M Jan 11  Ieyasu and the political order  Map is due
W Jan 13  Foreign relations
F Jan 15  Documents: Foreign relations (rdr. pp. 31-52): Prepare 1-2 typed pages*

Readings:  Totman, pp. 59-159
* Each time we have a “Documents” day you have a one pager due. The first thing that a historian does in analyzing a document is attempt to establish the following facts: Who wrote what to whom when and why? Knowing these facts is essential to properly using and analyzing a document. Write your first paragraph briefly identifying these facts, then the rest of your one-pager should discuss some important issue that you learned about from the document.

Discussion topics: Have you ever read James Clavell's Shogun? These are the real letters that got Clavell interested. They were written by William Adams, a Kentish sailor. As you read this think of the language William Adams uses to describe the people in Japan. Who are “kings”? Who is the “emperor”? How might this relate to the Watanabe article? What did Ieyasu want from Will Adams? What are the relations between the Iberians and the northern Europeans?

Week 3  Early Edo

M Jan 18  HOLIDAY: Martin Luther King Day
W Jan 20  Religion and thought

Readings:  Totman, pp. 160-223
Reader pp. 53-106:  Donald Shively, “Popular Culture,” Friday Documents; short story selections from Ihara Saikaku (Daryl Callahan trans.), (Tales of Samurai Honor) Buke Giri Monogatari, and from Ihara Saikaku (trans. Paul Gordon Schalow as The Great Mirror of Male Love), Nanshoku Ôkagami. Schalow’s introduction on page 91-95 of the reader will help you understand the tradition of samurai male love in its social context.

Discussion topics: These short stories by a popular writer of fiction in the 1690’s deal with two crucial aspects of samurai values and life; a sense of personal honor and a sense of devotion to one’s friends. The latter was tied up with
a strong tradition of same sex practice which was normal among samurai. Both issues often came into conflict with performing duty to one’s lord. Which seems more important to these samurai, personal honor or duty to lord? What other values can you learn from these stories?

**Week 4 Samurai Society**

M Jan 25  Asahi Monzaemon, A samurai’s life
W Jan 27  Bureiuchi: Slaying for rudeness
F Jan 29  Documents: Chûshingura: Prepare 1-2 typed pages

Readings:  Reader pp. 107-116: Eiko Ikegami, "The Vendetta of the Forty-Seven Samurai,"
            Friday Document, Chûshingura

Assignments: 5-6 page essay on Chûshingura due W Feb 3

The Chûshingura is a fictionalized and romanticized account of a real incident which took place in 1701-3. The real incident is described in Donald Keene’s introduction. I have also put in your reader a more recent analysis of the real event by Eiko Ikegami.

*Discussion topics:* Present your paper thesis statement and some evidence. See handout.

**Week 5 Rural society**

M Feb 1  Rural society
W Feb 3  Interlude: Saving a Samurai House in 1990’s Japan **Essay on Chûshingura due**
F Feb 5  Documents: Family litigation (samurai and urban) (rdr. pp. 151-166)

Readings:  Totman, pp. 223-279

*Discussion Topics:* What is the hierarchy in a family? Who has the right to divorce whom? How are marriage and adoption different and similar? Why do people adopt? Why divorce?

**Week 6 Commercial Culture: Travel and Publishing**

M Feb 8  Publishing
W Feb 10  Travel Culture and Commercial Culture

Readings:  Totman, pp. 280-315,

*Discussion Topics:* What do you learn about the world of travel? What were the facilities available? What were the difficulties? Why travel at all?

**Week 7 Economic Change**

M Feb 15  **Holiday:** President’s Day
W Feb 17  The Economy of Service and Ecological Problems
F  Feb 19  Documents: Criticisms and commentary (rdr. pp. 213-222) Prepare 1-2 typed pages

Readers:  “Selections of Passages from petitions...” (Petitions from Tosa people with criticisms of government and
suggestions for reforms in the domainal country of Tosa); “Decay of the Tokugawa system” (Writings of samurai critics

Assignments:  5-6 page mini-research paper on documents of your choice in relation to at least one secondary source,
deue Wed. Mar 3. You may use a document from the reader or choose from ones which I will suggest in a list on a
handout.

Discussion topics:  What did these people see wrong with their governments and societies? What were their proposed
solutions? Are the Edo ones different from the Tosa ones?

Week 8  A Changing Politics

M Feb 22  Reforms in the Tokugawa polity
W Feb 24  Reforms in domain polities
245-264)  Prepare 1-2 typed pages

Readings:  Totman, pp. 316-377,
Aizawa Seishisai (Victor Koschman, trans.), Shinron: chapter 1 "Kokutai"

Discussion topics:  What does Aizawa see as wrong with society and government? What are his proposed solutions?
What does he think makes Japan special?

Week 9  A Japanese Culture and its Borders

M Mar 1  Chinese and Nativist Learning
W Mar 3  The West  5-6 page essay due today
F Mar 5  Documents: The Phaeton Incident, (reader pp. 301-310)

Thomas Smith, "Okura Nagatsune and the Technologists,"  W.G. Aston "H.M.S. Phaeton at Nagasaki in 1808."
Discussion Topics:  What does the Phaeton Incident say about the military preparedness of the samurai? What specific
problems do they have?

Week 10  Late Edo Society

M Mar 8  Popular Religion
W Mar 10  Popular Economic Activism
F Mar 12  Documents: samurai and merchants in early 1800's (rdr. pp. 329-338)

Readings:  Totman, pp. 378-427,
    Reader 311-338: Nakagawa Sugane, “Inari Worship in Early Modern Osaka,”  Hiraga Gennai, "On
Farting"; Shikitei Sanba (Robert Leutner trans.), selection from "The Bathhouse of the Floating World."
Discussion Topics:  I hope you enjoy these two pieces of fiction. What do they reflect of the values of the authors? They
are fiction but what might they tell you about society?

FINAL EXAM:  TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 8-11 AM