



EALL 371 (Spring 2023)

Medievalizing Japan

Facts & Fictions of the Samurai World(s)

Course Description

This course seeks to discover the composite nature of the Japanese warrior, a semi-mythical figure whose physical and psychological contours have been traced, erased, and deformed innumerable times throughout the centuries. Featured across a plethora of genres and media—from tales to dramas, from woodblock prints to movies and beyond—the “samurai trope” adapted to ever-new contexts, lending itself to different uses (and abuses).

By examining both literary and historical sources, we will delve into the philosophy of life and death as it was developed in medieval warrior circles. We will also problematize how this enduring cultural heritage has been popularized during the Edo period; distorted to fit within the imperialist agenda of Meiji and wartime Japan; and, more recently, turned into a catalyst of transregional practices, beliefs, and identities.

Instructor: Dr. [Pier-Carlo Tommasi](#) (he/him)

Class Time: TR 10:30-11:45 AM

Room: Moore 111

E-mail: tommasi@hawaii.edu

Office Hours: TR 12:00–1:00 PM, Moore 387

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to identify specific works of Japanese literature—both canonical and less well-known—and describe their relationship with surrounding cultural and historical circumstances.
2. Students will understand the substantial difference between “medieval” and “medievalist” when approaching a primary source, mastering the know-how to unpack myths, legends, and contemporary representations of samurai by comparing these materials to historical evidence of samurai behavior, values, and practices.
3. Students will become familiar with the Japanese epic tradition and be able to recognize its most beloved “heroes,” reassessing their cultural legacy in the modern world.
4. Students will learn how to effectively express their opinions and summarize other people’s ideas through oral and written assignments.
5. Students will hone their bibliographical search techniques to find scholarly works related to the themes of the course.
6. Students will refine their note-taking techniques to better track lectures, PowerPoints, and readings.
7. Students will learn to work in teams, not to collectively find the “right” answer, but to reveal nuances in their reading of new texts.
8. Students will learn how to discuss, present on, and creatively engage with literary and documentary materials in an informed and respectful manner, thus increasing their sensitivity to cultural difference, orientalism, and appropriation issues.

In addition, the following EALL departmental SLOs and university-wide ILOs (Institutional Learning Objectives) apply, at least in part, to this course:

1. [SLO5: RESEARCH] Conduct independent research on topics in Japanese literature and/or linguistics, and effectively communicate the results.
2. [SLO7: LITERATURE] Identify and describe major authors, works, features, forms, and styles of Japanese literature, both premodern and modern.
3. [SLO8: LITERATURE] Analyze and interpret works of Japanese poetry, prose, and drama, read both in translation and in the original Japanese, using terms appropriate to each genre.
4. [SLO9: LITERATURE] Situate and evaluate Japanese literature in its social, historical, intellectual, and religious contexts.
5. [ILO1 – Know - Breadth and Depth of Knowledge, 1.a] “General education knowledge (arts and humanities).”
6. [ILO2 – Do - Intellectual and Practical Skills, 2.d] “Think critically and creatively.”
7. [ILO3 – Value - Personal and Social responsibility, 3.h] “Respect for people and cultures.”

Textbooks and Supplies

This is a “green course” because it supports sustainability, so there are no expensive textbooks or course readers to purchase. Instead, **all reading material will be made available in electronic format** on our online platforms, Laulima and Perusall.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Attendance and Participation (15%)

Daily attendance will be taken by the instructor. Students are expected to attend all class meetings, arrive on time, and actively participate in class discussion. **Coming to class well-prepared** is crucial for a successful class session. You will be asked to articulate their opinion on the assigned readings for the day. Please be conscientious of your presence in class and strive to create a space in which we can all learn and participate in discussion. Don't be afraid of asking questions and sharing your thoughts. Similarly, be ready to challenge your and your classmates' assumptions always in a respectful manner.

As a matter of courtesy, please **turn off cell phones** and other communication and entertainment devices prior to the beginning of class. Notify me in advance if you are monitoring an emergency. Computers and tablets are welcome to take notes.

In the event that you are unable to attend class (illness, family emergency, or otherwise), **please give a notice of absence prior to class** or as soon as possible. Please notice that **the maximum number of excused absences is three**.

Research shows that the eventual triggers for traumatic experiences are thoroughly unpredictable. We may come across **sensitive topics** during the semester (violence, suicide, and so forth). If you ever feel that a topic is disturbing, please reach out by email.

- Perusall Annotations (30%)

Students are expected to have read the assigned readings by the deadline (see class schedule below). In order to ensure that students are prepared to engage in meaningful discussion during class, everyone is required to **submit a minimum of five annotations** (**2 comments** of your own + **3 questions or comments** for a classmate) on every assigned text prior to class through the e-learning platform Perusall, which you can access via our Lulima page. These annotations are designed to give students an opportunity to engage closely with the text, pose questions to the class, and propose their interpretations. The conditions for the annotations include the following:

1. They should be spread throughout the reading (i.e., Don't put all five annotations on the first few pages).
2. Two annotations should be your own interpretations and/or comments on something in the reading. These do not need to be long; 3-4 sentences will suffice.
3. Three annotations should be in the form of a question you have. It can be a question related to meaning, significance, or even contemporary popular culture. Otherwise, you can reply to one of your fellow classmates' comments.

You are free to ask factual questions about the readings, comment on author style, or try to find connections with other texts. **Annotations are due the day before class by 11:59 PM through Perusall.**

- **Periodical Assignments (15%)**

1. **Tweet Assignment & Reflection Paper:** At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to submit via email a tweet-like statement (140 characters or fewer), summarizing your idea of “samurai.” You can attach an image or a short video. At the end of the semester, you will share a reflection post on the Laulima forum (approximately 500 words) based on your own tweet, discussing whether/how your opinion has changed. **Due by Thursday, April 13 (23:59 PM) – Worth 5%**
2. **Summary Exercise:** You will write a short summary of two secondary sources (academic papers and/or book chapters) chosen from the Perusall folder “Readings for Summary.” Write approximately 500 words for each summary, assessing the scholar’s argument in your own words. Feel free to write in the style of a message to a class-mate who has not done the readings, but make sure your synthesis covers *all* the key points. Then, compose a short paragraph (300–500 words) describing how the two readings are similar/different from each other in terms of method (i.e., approach to the primary sources) and conclusions, highlighting your personal opinion and takeaways. To be submitted on Google Assignment via our Laulima page. **Due by Thursday, by February 16 (23:59 PM) – Worth 10%**

- **Midterm Paper (20%)**

The midterm paper consists in a **three-to-six-page essay of critical analysis** (N.B. not a descriptive statement) on a samurai character—historical or fictional—as portrayed in any primary source—ancient or modern. After providing a short synopsis, examine that character based on your research findings. Contextualize the representation of that specific samurai by considering the historical, cultural, spiritual, and socio-political factors. You can use “I” when appropriate, but please ensure that you do not write colloquially. The essay should be persuasive, which means presenting a thesis and defending it by citing from the text as well as from reputable secondary sources. Your bibliography must include all references cited in footnotes (three at least)—anthologies and translations, scholarly monographs and journal articles, newspaper and magazine articles, exhibition catalogues, etc. Do NOT use internet materials such as Wikipedia and undergraduate honor theses as your source since they often convey erroneous information. You will learn how to find bibliographic resources through online databases such as our University Library OPAC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and of course by asking me or your wonderful librarians. Submit your paper on Google Assignment via Laulima.

Due by Thursday, March 9 (23:59 PM)

Please be aware of the following rules and policies:

- For both summary and midterm paper use **12-point font Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, double spaced, paginated**. Bibliography must be on a separate page. You can consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*, but any citation style is fine.
- The university has strict policies on academic integrity. You must not portray the work of others as your own, nor use AI text generators. **Documented cases of plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty will result in a ZERO GRADE.**
- I will grade **late assignments at ½ their value**. In general, I will otherwise aim to be flexible with you and your needs provided that you are communicative.

- Final Group Presentation and Project-related Materials (20%)

At the end of the term, students will get into **small groups (ideally 3 members)** and give a group presentation, exploring authors, works, and figures related to the course topic. Every group will have to come up with a final project: its focus, format, etc., as well as delegate tasks, and execute them. Each group will also need to appoint a leader who makes sure the project is realized in a timely manner. Your presentation may be a conventional Power-Point and/or have a creative component (a conceptual map, a painting, a video, a play, or anything else). This project is yours, so you decide WHAT it is and HOW you want to deliver it. This assignment will allow students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and **take an active role in the course**. N.B. If you decide to talk about a work that we discussed during the semester (e.g., *The Tale of the Heike*), you must focus on a different section of the same work. You may NOT choose the same chapter(s) that we already covered in class.

Each student is required to submit an outline of their presentation to the instructor **by Thursday, April 6 (23:59 PM)**, explaining how their chosen subject contributes to the team's overall project goals. The proposal must include a list of the sources you consulted. On the presentation day, each member will have the floor for 5–7 minutes plus 3–5 minutes for introduction and wrap-up. Time management is important: try not to exceed 25 minutes altogether! **After the presentation, each group will submit their materials (PPTs/creative output) for evaluation.** Details about the group presentation, including a grading rubric and a list of instructions will be provided in a separate handout.

You are always welcome to come by my office hours to discuss your ideas, interests, bibliography, and presentation projects with me.

Grading Scale

A+	98 – 100 %	C+	78 – 79.99	F	59.99 and below
A	92 – 97.99	C	72 – 77.99		
A-	90 – 91.99	C-	70 – 71.99		
B+	88 – 89.99	D+	68 – 69.99		
B	82 – 87.99	D	62 – 67.99		
B-	80 – 81.99	D-	60 – 61.99		

Academic Dishonesty

Students who enroll in this course are required to abide by the **Student Conduct Code**. The most relevant section, on Academic Dishonesty, is as follows:

The following are examples of the types of behavior that conflict with the community standards that the UH values and expects of students. Engaging in, or attempting to engage in any of these behaviors subjects a student to the disciplinary process and sanctions on each campus. Acts of dishonesty, including but not limited to the following:

- a. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty.
- b. Furnishing false information to any UH official, faculty member, or office.
- c. Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any UH document, record, or form of identification.

The term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

1. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
2. use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
3. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the UH faculty, staff or student;
4. engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

See: http://www.studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/ for complete details.

Office of Title IX

Title IX is a landmark federal civil right that prohibits sex discrimination in education. The University of Hawaii is committed to providing a learning, working and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect and is free of all forms of sex discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these, the University has staff and resources on your campus to support and assist you. Staff can also direct you to resources that are in the community. As a member of the University faculty, I am required to immediately report any incident of sex discrimination or gender-based violence to the campus Title IX Coordinator. Although the Title IX Coordinator and I cannot guarantee confidentiality, you will still have options about how your case will be handled. My goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources and support you need. For more information regarding sex discrimination and gender-based violence, the University’s Title IX resources and the University’s Policy, Interim EP 1.204, go to: <http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/titleix/>.

KOKUA Program

Students who have a disability with related academic access needs are warmly encouraged to contact the KOKUA Program, Student Services Center, Room 013, (V/T) 956-7511. It serves undergraduate, graduate and professional students with learning, physical, psychiatric and other documented disabilities. In the spirit of “aloha” and respect, it works together – students, faculty, staff and KOKUA – to facilitate equal access for students with disabilities

to the Mānoa experience. KOKUA provides disability access services to individuals on a case-by-case basis, and students are not charged for these services. A student's disability status is considered confidential information and is only disclosed to faculty with the student's permission. KOKUA has served thousands of students with disabilities since our inception in 1966 and will continue to be here to serve the needs of students with disabilities. For further information, see: <http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>.

Other Information & Services

If you test positive for **COVID-19** or if you had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, you should contact the University Health Services Mānoa (UHSM) COVID-19 Resource Team at (808) 956-8965 or uhsm.covid@hawaii.edu. For further information on UHM Safety Practices, see <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/covid19/guidelines/safety-practices-reporting/>

Taking care of yourself physically and mentally is a fundamental part of your learning experience. In these stressful times, **counseling services** may be very useful: https://manoa.hawaii.edu/counseling/our_services/

Basic needs include food and housing, childcare, mental health, financial resources and transportation, among others. **Student basic needs security** is critical for ensuring strong academic performance, persistence and graduation, and overall student well being. If you or someone you know are experiencing basic needs insecurity, please check this link. UH System Basic Needs: <https://www.hawaii.edu/student-basic-needs/>

Office of **Veteran Student Services**: <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/veterans/>

Employability and your Japanese language study: The Department of East Asian Languages & Literatures is committed to providing students with information about the value of the skills and learning they develop in conjunction with their Japanese language study for future employment. The Department works with the Hawai'i Language Roadmap, a statewide initiative for a multilingual workforce for Hawai'i housed in the College of Arts, Languages and Letters, to provide students with opportunities to learn about marketing their language proficiency to employers (e.g., resume writing, interview training), to meet employers who are hiring for bilingual proficiency, and to credential their language proficiency with the nationally-recognized Global Seal of Biliteracy, a valued workforce credential. For more information: roadmap@hawaii.edu, or visit the Roadmap website at: <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/languageroadmap>