

HIST 3570 JAPANESE HISTORY
Fall 2025
Syllabus

Course Introduction and Learning Objectives

Japanese History (HIST 3570.001)

This course is designed to give you the "big picture" overview of the history of Japan, from the Jomon Culture (ca. 10,500 BCE) through the 1970's and beyond. We will be covering myth and history, the imperial system, Buddhism and Confucianism, samurai culture, modern economic development, European imperialism, Japan's rise to a world power, and the post-World War II "economic miracle."

Instructional Staff

- Instructor: Harold Tanner
- Office: 256 Wooten Hall
- Office Hours (on Zoom or in person): Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00-3:00 p.m., or on other days/times by appointment.
- Email: harold.tanner@unt.edu

Communication Expectations

My communication with students will take place primarily through course announcements in Canvas and by e-mail. If you need to contact me for any reason, e-mail to the above UNT e-mail address is the best way to do so. Please use your UNT e-mail account for all correspondence, as I cannot discuss your work in the course in e-mails using a personal non-UNT e-mail account. I will make every effort to respond to e-mail messages within 24 hours, if not before. However, I may not be reading or responding to e-mail after 5:00 p.m. on weekdays or on weekends or holidays. If I do happen to see an e-mail which requires immediate attention, I will try to deal with it as soon as possible. However, please be aware that messages sent after 5:00 p.m. on weekdays, late Friday afternoon or on weekends may not receive a response until the next business day.

- Teaching Assistant: Cindy Lewis
- Office hours: Zoom: <https://unt.zoom.us/j/9848454166> Fridays 9-11am
- e-mail: cindylewis@my.unt.edu

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the overall narrative of Japanese history to others, drawing on books, primary source documents, and websites to do so.
2. Analyze historical change over time by drawing contrasts between sources produced in different eras.
3. Frame historical arguments using a variety of sources as evidence.
4. Identify and evaluate the argument of a textbook.
5. Draw on knowledge of Japanese history to explain or elucidate contemporary Japanese phenomena including (but not limited to) politics, economics, culture, environmental issues, and popular culture.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Required Texts

1. Brett L. Walker. *A Concise History of Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

- Availability:
 - Purchase hard copy or e-book at UNT Bookstore, Voertman's or elsewhere
 - e-book on reserve through UNT Library

2. Murasaki Shikibu (author), Richard Bowring (translator). *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

- Availability:
 - Purchase hard copy or e-book at UNT Bookstore, Voertman's or elsewhere
 - Hard copy on reserve through UNT Library

3. "Essays in Idleness" by Yoshida no Kenko (excerpts), In *The Columbia Anthology of Japanese Essays: Zuihitsu from the Tenth to the Twenty-First Century*. E-book available on reserve (e-reserve) via University of North Texas Libraries
 - Availability: On reserve in UNT Library. *To access the book on reserve you should go to the library homepage, scroll down to the students section and click on "course reserves." Then you should input the course code and prefix for the course (HIST 3570). Or--you may enter the name of the instructor. This will bring up the list of items on reserve. You can click on the item that you want and you will be prompted to input your EUID and password. The system may also ask for a password for this specific reserve item. If so, that password should be "Kenko." This will bring you to "Essays in Idleness." The library has this e-book set up for "unlimited access," so all of you should be able to read the book, even at the same time.*

4. Katsu Kokichi (author), Teruko Craig (translator). *Musui's Story: The Autobiography of a Tokugawa Samurai*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991.
 - Availability:
 - Purchase hard copy or e-book at UNT Bookstore, Voertman's or elsewhere
 - Hard copy on reserve through UNT Library

5. Natsume Soseki (author), Edwin McClellan (translator). *Kokoro*. Washington,, DC: Gateway Editions,2019. (warning: includes discussion of suicide.)
 - Availability:
 - Purchase hard copy or e-book at UNT Bookstore, Voertman's or elsewhere
 - Hard copy on reserve through UNT Library

6. William M. Tsutsui. *Japanese Popular Culture and Globalization*. Ann Arbor: The Association for Asian Studies, 2010.

- Availability:
 - Purchase hard copy or e-book from:
 - UNT Bookstore or Voertman's
 - Amazon (Follow [this link to Amazon.](#))
 - The Association for Asian Studies (follow [this link to the AAS.](#))
 - Hard copy on reserve through UNT Library

In addition to these materials, students will also be using PowerPoints prepared by the instructor and will be accessing a variety of online materials through links provided in the PowerPoints and on the Canvas site for the course.

Course Structure

This course takes place 100% online. All interaction with me and with your fellow students will take place in Canvas. There are 15 weeks of content that you will move through.

The course is organized into five modules of course content plus one final exam module.

For each of the five course content modules, you will work your way through the following course materials:

- A. Assigned readings in the course textbook (Walker, *A Concise History of Japan*)
- B. One supplemental PowerPoint to go along with each chapter of the textbook. You should read the relevant textbook chapter before looking at the PowerPoint. In each PowerPoint, I have drawn on a wide range of sources including *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Andrew Gordon's *A Modern History of Japan*, Paul Varley's *Japanese Culture*, David J. Lu's *Japan: A Documentary History*, Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary and Donald Keene's *Sources of Japanese Tradition* and many others. each PowerPoint is basically a lecture--except you will read yourself, rather than listening to me talk.
- C. The PowerPoints also contain embedded links to a variety of online resources--museum websites, primary sources, videos and so on. You are strongly encouraged to explore those online resources. They will be particularly useful to you when you respond to the prompts in the discussion boards and when you write the three essays required for the course.

D. For each module there are also a variety of links to optional materials--articles, websites, videos--which may be of interest to you.

E. For each Module, you will have reading quizzes and a discussion board.

The final exam module, consisting of one essay and one discussion, will be done during finals week.

Procedure for Grading

Your work in this course will be graded in two stages. First, the teaching assistant for the course will make an initial assessment of your work using the grading rubrics for the assignment. The grade that he assigns is a provisional grade. In the second stage, the instructor will look over your work. The instructor may change the provisional grade assigned by the Teaching Assistant, and that change could be in an upward or a downward direction. The instructor is the final arbiter on all grades in this course. We will try to set Canvas so that the grades for each assignment are not made visible to students until after the instructor has finalized the grades. However, Canvas may not make it possible for us to do that consistently.

Timeliness of Grading

Normally, we will return feedback and grades on all written assignments within 1 week of the due date. However, if we see that we will be unable to return your feedback and grades that quickly we will post an Announcement to let everyone know when the grades can be expected.

Course Grading

Assignment	Point Value
1 Self-introduction @ 15 points	= 15 points (1.5% of total grade)
16 reading quizzes @ 13 points each	= 208 points (20.8% of total grade)
5 discussion boards @ 64.5 points each	= 322.5 points (32.25% pf total grade)
2 essays based on reading @ 130 points each	= 260 points (26% of total grade)
Final exam discussion board @ 64.5 points	= 64.5 points (6.45% of total grade)
Final exam essay @ 130 points	= 130 points (13% of total grade)
Total	= 1,000 points

That's it! Notes:

1. There is no midterm examination.
2. There are 16 reading quizzes: one for the "Introduction" to Walker's textbook (*A Concise History of Japan*) and one for each of the fifteen chapters. Each quiz is a "low-stakes" exercise--only 1.3% of your grade for the course. But taken all together, they add up to 20.8% of your grade--so don't blow them off! You will get two tries for each quiz. Canvas will count the highest grade.
3. There is one discussion board for each of the five course modules, and one as a component of the final exam. The discussion board prompts will be designed to encourage you to draw on material from the textbook reading for that module, along with the other materials for that module (PowerPoint presentations, videos, websites etc.)
4. For the three essays, you will be asked to make use of the books and other reading assigned for the course.

Grading

- A: 90-100% (900-1000 points. Outstanding, excellent work. The student performs well above the minimum criteria.)
- B: 80-89% (800-899 points. Good, impressive work. The student performs above the minimum criteria.)
- C: 70-79% (700-799 points. Solid, college-level work. The student meets the criteria of the assignment.)
- D: 60-69% (600-699 points. Below average work. The student fails to meet the minimum criteria.)
- F: 59 and below (599 points or less. Sub-par work. The student fails to complete the assignment.)

Grade-related Policies

Late Work

As a general rule, I will not accept late work in this course. All work turned in after the deadline will receive a grade of zero unless the student has a [university-excused absence](#). and provides written documentation with 48 hours of the missed deadline. I understand

that some of us, through no fault of our own, will encounter unexpected challenges which may impact our studies. If that happens, I ask that you communicate clearly and frankly with me so that we can work together on appropriate ways in which we can address those challenges together. Early communication and documentation of issues that are affecting your ability to complete the required work according to schedule will help us to resolve such issues in a fair and timely manner.

Grade Disputes

The instructor will handle all grade disputes. Before you come to me to dispute a grade, please review your work in light of the grading rubric to make sure that you have a valid case to make. If you still want to dispute the grade, then e-mail me to set up a time to talk. When we meet, please show me whatever evidence you have to support your argument that you deserve a higher grade than you received.

Extra Credit

There are no extra credit opportunities in this course.

Make-ups

Students will not be given the opportunity to make up work that they have missed earlier in the semester. Exceptions will be made in cases where the student missed assignments due to documented illness or other valid, documented issues.

AI, Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

As stated in UNT's *Plagiarism Guide*:

The "unauthorized" use of any person or technology that assists in a student's assignment, project, or paper is considered cheating under the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003). Unless a professor or instructor gives explicit "authorization," AI cannot be used to complete assignments, projects, or papers. Doing so will result in a "cheating" violation.

(See [AI, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity](#).)

The AI policy in this course is “prohibited use.” In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like [insert tool(s) here, e.g., Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini] is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not

align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the [Student Academic Integrity policy](#). Additionally, tools like [insert tool(s) here, e.g. Grammarly, spellcheck, predictive text, speech-to-text, and translation tools] are not allowed as they blur authorship and misrepresent your independent work. All work must be your own.

Any issues with unethical use of AI to complete assignments, projects or papers will be handled according to the process outlined in UNT policy [06.003 Student Academic Integrity](#).

Guidelines for Discussion Boards

There are a total of six discussion boards for this course: one for each of the five course content modules, and one as part of the final exam for the course. For each discussion board, you will be asked to post an initial response which must be from 300-500 (more is OK) words. You should also respond to at least two of your peers' submissions (each response 30 words minimum).

The discussion boards are scheduled as follows:

Discussion Board #1 opens 12:00 a.m. Thursday 4 September; your initial post is due by 11:59 p.m. Monday 8 September; your responses to others due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday 10 September). Discussion Board #1 will close (become locked) at 11:59 p.m. Wednesday 10 September.

Discussion Board #2 will open at 12:00 a.m. Thursday September 25; your initial post is due by 11:59 p.m. Monday September 29; your responses to others are due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday October 1. Discussion Board #2 will close (become locked) Wednesday October 1 at 11:59 p.m.

Discussion Board #3 will open at 12:00 a.m. Thursday October 16; your initial post is due by 11:59 p.m. Monday October 20; your responses to others are due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday October 22. Discussion Board #3 will close (become locked) on Wednesday October 22 at 11:59 p.m.

Discussion Board #4 will open at 12:00 a.m. Thursday November 6; your initial post is due by 11:59 p.m. Monday November 10; your responses to others are due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday November 12. Discussion Board #3 will close (become locked) on Wednesday November 12 at 11:59 p.m.

Discussion Board #5 will open at 12:00 a.m. on Monday 1 December; your initial post is due by 11:59 p.m. Saturday 6 December; responses to others are due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday 7 December. Discussion Board #5 will close (become locked) at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday 7 December.

Discussion Board #6 (Final Exam Discussion) will be available at 12:00 a.m. on Saturday December 6. All original posts are due 11:59 p.m. Wednesday December 10; responses to peers are due by 11:59 p.m. Friday December 12; Discussion Board #6 will close (become locked) on Friday 12 December at 11:59 p.m.

The topic for each discussion board is included in the "Overview and Learning Objectives" for each module. This way, you can know the discussion topic in advance and prepare accordingly.

For full details, please read the instructions and the grading rubric for each discussion board. The grading rubric includes details on expectations regarding timeliness, length, use of sources, and quality of discussion.

Guidelines and Resources for Essay Assignments

You will be asked to write three essays as a part of your work for this course. Essays #1 and #2 will be comparative in nature. For each of these essays, you will read two sources and be asked to draw comparisons based on your reading of those sources. You will also be expected to use other sources (such as the textbook, the course PowerPoints, and websites linked from the PowerPoints or elsewhere in the course) to expand on and support whatever points you choose to make in the essay. Essay #3--which is part of the final exam for the course--will be based off of one source (but, again, you will be expected to use other sources to enrich your argument).

Specific instructions for each essay assignment are available in the assignments themselves. Each assignment also has a grading rubric attached to it. You are encouraged to look carefully at the grading rubric before you write your essay. The rubric clearly communicates expectations and shows how the assignment will be graded. You can see the instructions & rubrics for Essays #1 & #2 immediately--the specific instructions & rubric for essay #3 will be available at the beginning of finals week.

Here, though, I'd like to give you some general instructions which are applicable to all three essays, and to point you in the direction of a few resources that may be helpful.

1. Every essay needs to follow the standard form common to most college writing: an introduction (in which you state your thesis), body (several paragraphs in which you

develop your argument, step by step, offering information and evidence to explain your thesis and to convince the reader that your thesis is valid and based on facts--rather than being just your "opinion" or what you "feel"); and conclusion (a final paragraph in which you bring your argument back to your thesis and, perhaps, point to further questions, or point out the broader significance of the thesis and the evidence that you've used to prove the thesis.

2. Although each essay assignment is based primarily on specific readings assigned in the course, I do expect you to use at least three other sources to offer supporting evidence for whatever point it is you want to make. I have made a number of different sources available to you in the course materials--the textbook, PowerPoints, primary sources embedded in the PowerPoints or linked from the PowerPoints, websites linked from the PowerPoints, and sources linked from the "Materials" section for each Module of the course.
3. You may also know of other sources. You are welcome to use sources (primary or secondary) that are not included in the course materials. However--you need to exercise judgment in the use of sources. There is a lot of garbage on the internet. Wikipedia is not an acceptable source; essays or websites by random college or high school students, history buffs, travel agencies, companies that offer to sell you essays that they hired someone to write for you . . . etc. are also not acceptable sources. I'll be frank: if I find that you've used rubbish websites, your grade will suffer. If you have a question about whether or not a website is legit--feel free to ask me!
4. All essays must be college-level work. Ability to cite your sources correctly is a part of writing at the college level. Citations may be either MLA or Chicago style.
5. If you are not familiar with MLA or Chicago style citation guidelines, you may find those--and much more--on the website of the [UNT Writing Center](#).

Course Technology Requirements

- A computer with browser suitable for Canvas.
- Ability to use Canvas
- Ability to follow links to access website

Content Warning

One of the readings in this class Natsume Soseki's novel, *Kokoro*, deals with suicide. If reading this material will be a problem, please contact the instructor, Dr. Tanner, as soon as possible in order to arrange an alternative reading assignment. If you are thinking about or considering suicide, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

This class will include links to learning units created by faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. These learning units employ woodblock prints and photographs from the mid-19th and 20th centuries. These include depictions which some students may find offensive. To quote from the Visualizing Cultures website itself:

Some of these images are harsh, for history itself is harsh.

While many images may be aesthetically attractive, or entertaining, or “realistic” (like photography), some are cruel, brutal, and offensive. Users must keep in mind that the purpose of Visualizing Cultures is to gain a more accurate, first-hand sense of all the many ways in which people have presented and viewed their times.

Graphics that depict dark aspects of history—such as violence, intolerance, racism, aggressive nationalism, war and atrocity, abuse of others and of the environment in general—have not been censored.

We must confront such harsh images directly—and struggle to critically understand them—if we hope to ever make a better world.

...

Please view and use these Visualizing Cultures units carefully, in the spirit in which they have been prepared.

To tear images out of context and use them irresponsibly and provocatively destroys the highest ideals of uncensored sharing and communication that sophisticated virtual technology now makes possible. To use the graphic imagery of the past to perpetuate cycles of violence and hatred runs counter to everything for which Visualizing Cultures stands. The goal must be to understand the past so that we can make the present and future world a better place.

ODA Statement

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing reasonable academic accommodations must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a

reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website.