THE SAMURAI IN MYTH AND HISTORY
HI 370 / LJ 282
Spring 2012
Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30 -2:00 CAS 216

COURSE DESCRIPTION This course explores the history of the image and experiences of samurai in Japanese history. It examines how samurai have defined themselves, and how others have portrayed them in literature, art, plays, film, and animation. Through these media, we will track how samurai ideals have been created, contested, and transformed over time, and investigate how and why they have come to function in modern times as one of the most widely recognized Japanese “traditions,” not simply in Japan but around the globe.

REQUIREMENTS Key requirements include thoughtful reading, mindful attendance, and consistent participation. Students will write two short essays (4 pages) and one longer research paper (10 pages). In the short essays, students will analyze a primary source (literary work, art, play) and a film in relation to the history of a topic presented in the week’s readings and/or lectures. Students can choose the weeks on which they want to base their essays, but one essay must be handed in by March 1 and the second by April 10. In their research papers, students will choose a particular samurai (either from a list distributed in class or in consultation with the instructor) and analyze the representation of that figure in three different eras and/or media (literature, statues, paintings, prints, kabuki theater, museum collections, comic books, music videos, TV shows, films animation, video games, etc.). A one-page discussion of your choice of research topic (which samurai you have chosen) and a bibliography are due March 29. Research papers will be due at the start of class on May 1. All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course.

GRADES Grades are earned, not given, and will be calculated as follows:

10% class attendance and participation.
20% (each) short essays, one due by 3/1 and the second due by 4/10.
50% research paper, due in class on 5/1.

REQUIRED READING
Available for purchase at Barnes and Noble:


Nitobe Inazō, *Bushido: the Soul of Japan* (any edition or online)


All other readings can be found online on the course Blackboard website.

**PLAGIARISM** Plagiarism is a serious offense against intellectual community and will not be tolerated. You are advised to review the college's definitions of and policies regarding plagiarism and cheating, which are available online and in print. See, for example: [http://www.bu.edu/cas/undergraduate/conductcode.html](http://www.bu.edu/cas/undergraduate/conductcode.html).

**ATTENDANCE** Attendance at every class meeting is expected. It is your responsibility to contact the professor in advance if you will be unable to attend class, and to get notes, handouts, instructions, etc. from the sessions you have missed.

**SCHEDULE** Weekly readings are to be completed prior to Tuesday’s class meeting so that discussions can be informed and productive.

I. Introduction

Online Readings for Week 1

a. Course introduction (1/17)

b. Intertwined definitions of “Japan” and “samurai” (1/19)

II. History, Tradition, and Samurai

Ikegami, 3-14, 45-77.

Sato, 3-21, 34-46, 59-60, 80-87.

Online Readings for Week 2

a. Samurai as “tradition” in Japan and around the world (1/24)

b. Warriors in early Japanese myths and texts (1/26)

III. Varieties of Warriors in Early Japan
Ikegami, 78-118.

Online Readings for Week 3

a. The Imperial Military & the Diversity of “Samurai” (1/31)
b. Religion and Warrior Culture (2/2)

FILM: Tales of the Taira Clan (*Shin Heike Monogatari*)

IV. The Advent of Warrior Government


Online Readings for Week 4

a. The Gempei War and the Rise of the Kamakura Bakufu (2/7)
b. Yoshitsune: Supreme Warrior and Tragic Hero (2/9)

FILM: Yoshitsune (drama on Japanese public TV – pick 3 episodes)

V. Challenges to Warrior Rule & its Transformation

Ikegami 119-134.

Sato, 158-187.

Explore the interactive web version of Takezaki Suenaga’s Scrolls of the Mongol Invasion [here](http://www.bowdoin.edu/mongol-scrolls/). Be sure to look at the “Guided View” for the richest explanations of the text and its transformation throughout the centuries.

Online Readings for Week 5

a. Threats from without and within: Mongols and Emperors (2/14)
b. Transformations in culture & society (2/16)

VI. Samurai in Transition: Civil War and Western Threats

REMINDER: First short essay due NEXT Thursday

Ikegami, 135-148.

Sato, 204-231.
Online Readings for Week 6

a. No Class Meeting: Monday Schedule (2/21)

b. Warring States, the Arrival of Europeans & Changes in Warfare (2/23)

FILM: Shadow Warrior (Kagemusha)

VII. The Founding of the Tokugawa Bakufu

Ikegami, 149-194.
Sato, 232-247.

Online Readings for Week 7

a. Unification & the “Taming” of the Samurai (2/28)

b. Status, Ideology, and the Consolidation of Tokugawa Rule (3/1)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Last day to hand in first short essay

VIII. Tensions in the Tokugawa System

Ikegami, 195-298.
Sato, 304-340.

Online Readings for Week 8

a. The 47 Ronin: Ideal Samurai or Lowly Law Breakers? (3/6)

b. Images of the Samurai in Commoner Culture (3/8)

FILM: Treasury of Loyal Retainers (Chushingura)

IX. NO CLASS MEETINGS: SPRING BREAK!!! (3/12-3/16)

X. New Challenges and the Unraveling of Tokugawa Rule

REMINDER: One-page discussion of the person you’ve chosen to focus on in your research paper and additional bibliography of primary and secondary sources you will use due NEXT Thursday.

Online Readings for Week 10

a. Samurai Discontent and the Breakdown of Discipline (3/20)
b. Pressures from Within and Without (3/22)

FILM: Twilight Samurai (Tasogare Seibei)

XI. Sex, Love, and Gender among the Samurai

Online Readings for Week 11

a. Samurai Families and Gender (3/27)
b. Samurai Love (3/29)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: One-page discussion and bibliography for research paper.

FILM: Taboo (Gohatto)

XII. The Meiji Restoration

REMINDER: Second short essay due NEXT Tuesday

Ikegami, 327-369.

Online Readings for Week 12

a. The Last Samurai (Take One): The Shinsengumi (4/3)
b. The End of the Tokugawa Bakufu & the New Meiji State (4/5)

FILM: When the Last Sword is Drawn (Mibu gishi den)

XIII. The End of Samurai Privilege & the Samurai Legacy to the New Japan

Nitobe Inazō, Bushidō: the Soul of Japan (Preface, Intro, ch.1-4, 8-12, 15-17)

Online Readings for Week 13

a. Nation/Empire-building and the (Figure of the) Samurai (4/10)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Last day to hand in second short essay (Tuesday 4/10)
b. The Last Samurai (Take Two): Saigo Takamori 
FILM: Samurai X

XIV. “Samurai” in Imperial Japan?
Sato, 341-60.

Online Readings for Week 14
a. The Last Samurai (Take Three): Nogi Maresuke 
(4/17)
b. The Samurai Mystique and the Asia Pacific War 
(4/19)

XV. The Legacy of the Samurai in Post-War Japan
REMINDER: Research papers due at the start of class NEXT Thursday

Yukio Mishima, Patriotism

View Mishima’s film version of “Patriotism” online at:
http://www.ubu.com/film/mishima_rite.html
(WARNING: Very graphic, so you can skip if you're squeamish)
a. The Last Samurai (Take Four): Yukio Mishima 
(4/24)
b. FILM (in class): Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai 
(4/26)

XVI. The Globalization of the Samurai
Ikegami, 370-380.
a. Samurai Forever: Samurai in a Globalized World 
(4/28)
FILM (finish in class): Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai 
b. Whither the Samurai? Conclusions and Speculation 
(5/1)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Last day to hand in research paper