

Medieval Kyoto • Medieval Japan

— Creative Energies in the “Dark Ages” —

KCJS
Spring 2017

James L. McClain
WF 1:10~2:40

In the Western imagination, the terms “middle ages” and “medieval” often conjure up images of backwardness and stagnation. In contrast, Japan pulsated with political, economic, and cultural creativity during its *chūsei* epoch (中世時代) from the end of the twelfth century to the middle of the sixteenth. This course will use Kyoto as a focal point to explore key topics central to Japan’s medieval revolution: (•) the construction of new forms of political authority, namely the samurai-led shogunate that shared power with the Heavenly Sovereign and court aristocracy, (•) the advent of fresh cultural norms, centering on warrior values and the ethos of the detached hermit, (•) the appearance of Zen and popular Buddhist religious sects, (•) the intersection of noh performances and the innovative “Zen arts” (specifically the tea ceremony, landscape gardening, ink painting, and flower arranging) with samurai governance as an expression of rule through “soft-power,” (•) the emergence of commoners as wielders of economic and cultural influence, and (•) the destruction of Kyoto and its subsequent resurgence in the sixteenth century as a city shared by aristocrats, warriors, merchants, and artisans.

In addition to expanding our knowledge of the medieval period — especially as expressed in the centrality of the urban experience to the unfolding of Japanese history — this course embraces the following overarching goals:

- To deepen our understanding about the complex interrelationships between political, economic, and cultural transformations;
- To broaden exposure to diverse methods of assessing the past, with an emphasis on historical analysis but including multiple other disciplines;
- To foster a sophisticated interpretation of historical and other primary sources;
- To promote unbiased, thoughtful critiques of scholarly interpretations;
- To hone writing skills through a variety of essay assignments, with the aim of refining our ability to engage with complex causal analysis and to articulate arguments that integrate supporting evidence and analytical commentary;
- To sharpen oral communication skills by providing opportunities to articulate our views in a public forum, listen to the perceptions and insights of others, and use the intellectual exchange to refine and expand our knowledge of the Japanese past;
- To gain insight into how men and women in the modern era have remembered and interpreted the medieval past in order to define “Japaneseness” and to construct guidelines and justifications for their own beliefs and behaviors;
- To learn how to view the world from perspectives other than our own.

TOPICS AND READINGS

You are expected to read and to think about the assignments according to the following schedule. In advance of each meeting (or set of related meetings), I will distribute handouts listing readings, topics for consideration, a chronology, and a guide to important persons, institutions, and events.

The medieval period has a complicated set of chronological subdivisions. The scholars you will read pick and choose from the following:

Kamakura period, 1185-1333
Kenmu Restoration, 1333-1336
Nanbokuchō (Northern and Southern Courts) epoch, 1336-1392
Muromachi (Ashikaga) period, 1336-1573
Kitayama epoch, late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries
Higashiyama epoch, second half of fifteenth century
Sengoku (A Country at War), 1478-1568
Reunification (Azuchi-Momoyama epoch), 1568-1600

The Kamakura Epoch

The introductory segment of the course (January 11~27) spans the period from the late twelfth century to the 1330s. Significant historical and cultural developments include (a) the entrance of the samurai onto the stage of Japanese history, (b) a refashioning of governance designed to grant the samurai a share of authority with the Heavenly Sovereign and court nobility, (c) the calculated creation of warrior-centered cultural norms, and (d) a new prominence for Zen and the so-called popular religions.

==== January 11: Welcome: To a time and place

Topics:

Course content and expectations
Historiographic themes and issues
Is the medieval period still alive in contemporary Japan?

Recommended Reading:

John W. Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, ch. 7 (“The Feudal Age”), pp. 75-102 only (“The Bushi and the Kamakura Shogunate.”)

==== January 13: The new medieval political order (discussion and presentation with Q&A)

Discussion topic:

Historiographic issues

Readings for discussion:

Joan R. Piggott, "Defining 'Ancient' and 'Classical'," in Karl F. Friday, ed., *Japan Emerging*, pp. 21-31.

Andrew Edmund Goble, "Defining 'Medieval'," in Karl F. Friday, ed., *Japan Emerging*, pp. 32-41.

Topics for presentation with Q&A:

The Genpei Wars

Establishing the Minamoto (Kamakura) shogunate

Readings for discussion:

John W. Hall, "Kyoto as Historical Background," in Hall and Jeffery P. Mass, eds., *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, pp. 3-38.

Martin Collcutt, "The 'Emergence of the Samurai' and the Military History of Early Japan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56:1 (June 1996), pp. 151-64.

Andrew Edmund Goble, "The Kamakura Shogunate and the Beginnings of Warrior Power," in Karl F. Friday, ed., *Japan Emerging*, pp. 189-99

The Tale of the Heike, Helen Craig McCullough, tr., "Introduction" (pp. 1-11); pp. 23-30 only of chapter 1; chapter 4 (pp. 130-64); and ch. 6 (pp. 197-223) — do not worry about remembering every single detail, but, instead, try to focus on key events, the chronology of the Taira rise to power, and the varying characterizations (scholarly vs literary) of the Taira warriors and how they ruled Kyoto.

==== January 18: The new samurai cultural ethos (discussion and presentation)

Topics:

Samurai men

Samurai women

Readings:

Karl Friday, *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*, ch. 5 ("The Culture of War"), pp. 135-63.

The Tale of the Heike, chapter 11 (pp. 358-400), pp. 30-37 ("Giō") of chapter 1, and "The Initiates Chapter" (pp. 426-38).

Heike monogatari (dvd; Kawamoto Kihachirō, NHK Productions, 2003).

==== January 20: Zen... and the warrior ethos (presentation and discussion)

Topics:

Zen comes to Japan

Core beliefs
The monastic life
Kōan and enlightenment

Readings:

“Eisai,” *Wikipedia*, pp. 1-3.

“Dōgen,” *Wikipedia*, pp. 1-13.

Martin Collcutt, “The Zen Monastery in Kamakura Society,” in Jeffrey P. Mass, ed.,
Court and Bakufu in Japan: Essays in Kamakura History, pp. 191-220.

“Kōan,” *Wikipedia*, pp. 1-8.

Ekai (also known as Mumon; fl early thirteenth century), “The Gateless Gate”
(transcribed by Nyōgen Senzaki and Paul Reps), in Reps, comp., *Zen Flesh, Zen
Bones*, pp. 110-61; browse the section and bring in your personal favorite for
discussion.

Eiheiji (dvd; Takeuchi Saburō, NHK documentary, 1977).

**** January 20-21: Special class activity — overnight stay at a Zen temple

==== January 25: Reflections on the monastic life (field-trip summation)
The eccentric tradition (discussion)

Topics:

Reflections

Eccentrics: Who opted “out” and what ideas did they contribute about being “in”?

Readings:

A. L. Sadler, “Introduction,” in Sadler, tr., *The Ten Foot Square Hut and Tales of the
Heike*, pp. i-xii.

Kamo no Chōmei, *Hōjōki* (The Ten-Foot Square Hut), in A. L. Sadler, tr., *The Ten
Foot Square Hut and Tales of the Heike*, pp. 1-21.

Japanese History and Literature, part 2 (“Medieval Japan and Buddhism in Literature,
1185-1600”) (dvd; Project on Asia in the Core Curriculum of Schools and
Colleges, Columbia University, 1996).

==== January 27: The popular religious sects (presentation with Q&A)

Topics:

Commoner society and popular religion

Charismatic founders and sectarian teachings

Jōdo Shinshū, The True Pure Land Sect

What was “popular” about popular religion?

Readings:

- Pierre François Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down*, ch. 6 (“Kamakura: A Society in Transformation”), pp. 84-100.
James C. Dobbins, “Envisioning Kamakura Buddhism,” in Richard K. Payne, ed., *Re-Visioning “Kamakura” Buddhism*, pp. 24-42.
“Hōnen,” *Wikipedia*, pp. 1-7.
“Ippen,” *Wikipedia*, pp. 1-3.
“Nichiren Buddhism,” *Wikipedia*, pp. 1-6.
James C. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*, ch. 3 (“Shinran and His Teachings”), pp. 21-44.

The Muromachi Epoch

During second segment of our journey (February 1 ~ March 17), we will traverse the period from the 1330s until the end of the fifteenth century. In particular, we will investigate (a) the Mongol invasions and the fall of the Kamakura shogunate, (b) the rise of the Ashikaga family and the reconfigured political and economic underpinnings of shogunal rule, (c) the flamboyant Kitayama culture that flourished under the patronage of Yoshimitsu, and (d) the administration of Yoshimasa and the more subdued, Zen-influenced Higashiyama cultural flowering.

==== February 1: Retrospectives, on-the-spot reports, Preludes (discussion and reports)

Topics:

- What have we learned so far?
- Out-and-about reports.
- What’s next?

==== February 3: Establishing Ashikaga authority (presentation with Q&A)

Topics:

- Historical themes, c.1336~1500
- The Mongol invasions
- The early Ashikaga shoguns
- Regional warrior families

Readings:

- “Mongol Invasions of Japan,” *Wikipedia*, pp. 1-6.
- John W. Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, ch. 7 (“The Feudal Age”), pp. 102-13 only (“The Ashikaga Hegemony”).
- Pierre François Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down*, ch. 7 (“The Second Middle Ages: The Turning Point of the Fourteenth Century”), pp. 101-20.

Thomas D. Conlan, *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth-Century Japan*, “Introduction,” pp. 1-11; ch. 3 (“The Sinews of War: Military Supply and the Consolidation of Regional Authority”), pp. 83-106; and ch. 5 (“Largesse and the Limits of Loyalty: Lordly Obligations in the Age of Two Courts”), pp. 141-64.
Kenneth A. Grossberg, *Japan’s Renaissance: The Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu*, ch. 2 (“The Ashikaga Shogun in Muromachi Japan”), pp. 13-27 only.

==== February 8: Yoshimitsu and Kitayama ostentation (presentation with Q&A, discussion)

Topics:

What innovations did Yoshimitsu undertake, and how did he change the conception of the office of shogun?

How did Yoshimitsu use monumental architecture to enhance his prestige and authority?

A consideration of “soft power” and the concept of cultural hegemony

Readings:

Kenneth A. Grossberg, *Japan’s Renaissance*, ch. 2 (“The Ashikaga Shogun in Muromachi Japan”), pp. 27-39 only (“The Ashikaga Synthesis of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu”), and ch. 3 (“Muromachi Economy and Bakufu Income”), pp. 65-86.

H. Paul Varley, “Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama: Social Change and Shogunal Patronage in Early Muromachi Japan,” in John W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi, eds., *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, pp. 183-204.

H. Paul Varley, “Cultural Life of the Warrior Elite in the Fourteenth Century,” in Jeffrey P. Mass, ed., *The Origins of Japan’s Medieval World*, pp. 192-208.

==== February 10: Class visit to Kinkakuji and the temple Tōjin

==== February 15: Performance art in the Age of Yoshimitsu (presentation and discussion)

Topics:

Noh as history

Noh as drama

Readings:

Donald Keene, *Some Japanese Portraits* (Kodansha 1983), “Zeami, 1333/4-1443,” pp. 35-42.

Thomas B. Hare, *Zeami’s Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo*, ch. 1 (“A Documentary Biography”), pp. 11-38.

Zeami Motokiyo, “Seami on the Art of the Nō,” tr. Ryusaku Tsunoda and Donald Keene, in Donald Keene, comp. and ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature: From the Earliest Era to the Mid-nineteenth Century*, pp. 258-63.

“The Death of Atsumori,” in Helen Craig McCullough, tr., *Genji and Heiki: Selections from The Tale of Genji and The Tale of Heike*, pp. 394-96.

Zeami Motokiyo, “Atsumori” in Royall Tyler, ed. and tr., *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 37-48.

Zeami Motokiyo, “Takasago” in Royall Tyler, ed. and tr., *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 277-92.

The noh portion only of *The Traditional Performing Arts of Japan: Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku* (dvd; Funatsu Hajime, Shin-Ei, 2005).

Atsumori (video recording; in Japanese with subscript;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mXuGC16ix4>).

**** Special class activity: Attend a noh performance, the date and venue will depend on theater bills

**** February 17: No class (KCJS Spring Trip on February 17-18)

==== February 22: Reflections on monumental architecture, performance art, and “soft power” (field-trip summation and discussion)

==== February 24: From Yoshimitsu to Yoshimasa, Kinkakuji to Ginkakuji, the grandiose to the understated (presentation with Q&A)

Topics:

Yoshinori...

Yoshimasa...

...regional lords...

...and the hoarfrost of the fifteenth century

Readings:

Pierre François Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society*, ch. 10 (“The Splendor and Misery of the Muromachi Century: New Uprisings, New Cultures”), pp. 161-80.

Kenneth A. Grossberg, *Japan’s Renaissance*, ch. 2 (“The Ashikaga Shogun in Muromachi Japan”), pp. 43-52 (“The Shogun as Autocrat: Ashikaga Yoshinori”) and pp. 52-63 (“The Decline of Shogunal Autocracy: Ashikaga Yoshimasa”).

Hayashiya Tatsusaburō with George Elison, “Kyoto in the Muromachi Age,” in John W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi, eds., *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, pp. 15-25 only.

Kenkō (aka Yoshida Kenkō and Urabe no Kaneyoshi), *Essays in Idleness (Tsurezuregusa)*, tr. Donald Keene, “Introduction,” pp. xiii-xxi and selections of your choice.

**** March 1: No class (KCJS Spring Break)

**** March 3: No class (KCJS Spring Break)

===== March 8: The “Zen Arts”: Tea (presentation with Q&A)

Topics:

From beverage to ritual

From staying awake to staying “elite”

Readings:

H. Paul Varley and George Elison, “The Culture of Tea: From Its Origins to Sen no Rikyū,” in Elison and Bardwell L. Smith, eds., *Warlords, Artists, & Commoners: Japan in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 187-206 only.

Murai Yasuhiko, “The Development of *Chanoyu*: Before Rikyū” (tr. Paul Varley), in Paul Varley and Kumakura Isao, eds., *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu* (University of Hawaii Press 1989), pp. 3-32.

Sadler, A. L., *Cha-no-yu: The Japanese Tea Ceremony*, pp. 93-97.

The Japanese Tea Ceremony (documentary film; Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, 1989).

===== March 10: The “Zen Arts”: Gardens (presentation and discussion)

Topics:

Ryōanji and Daitokuji

Readings:

Keene, Donald, *Appreciations of Japanese Culture*, ch. 1 (“Japanese Aesthetics”), pp. 11-25.

Daisen-in, “Daisen-in,” pp. 1-49.

Donald Keene, *Some Japanese Portraits*, “Ikkyū, 1394-1481,” pp. 15-25.

===== March 15: The “Zen Arts”: Decorative and fine arts (presentation and discussion)

Topic:

Interiors

Sumie: Landscape paintings

Ikebana: From floral arrangements to The Way of Flowers

Readings:

- Itō Teiji with Paul Novograd, “The Development of Shoin-Style Architecture,” in John W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi, eds., *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, pp. 227-39.
Tanaka Ichimatsu, *Japanese Ink Painting: Shubun to Sesshu*, ch. 4 (“Sesshu, a Painter Outside the Academy”), pp.105-29.

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===== March 17: Class visit to Ginkakuji

The Muromachi Epoch

The final leg of the course (March 22 ~ April 14) will carry us into the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Here, our focus will shift to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the last towering medieval figure, and the lived experiences of the common people, especially in Kyoto but also in nearby Osaka and Sakai.

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===== March 22: Retrospectives, on-the-spot reports, Preludes (discussion and reports)

Topics:

- What have we learned so far?
- Out-and-about reports.
- What’s next?

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===== March 24: Kyoto under siege (presentation with Q&A)

Topics:

- The Ōnin Wars (1467-1477)
- Urban violence
- Coping...and even prospering

Readings:

- Hayashiya Tatsusaburō with George Elison, “Kyoto in the Muromachi Age,” in John W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi, eds., *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, pp. 25-34 only.
Suzanne Gay, *The Moneylenders of Late Medieval Japan*, “Introduction,” pp. 1-8;
Part 1 (“The Setting: Kyoto’s Early Years and Medieval Residents”), pp. 18-33 only; and Chapter 5 (“Urban Affairs”), pp. 172-200.
Mary Elizabeth Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto*, ch. 2 (“Dancing is Forbidden: The Structures of Urban Conflict”), pp. 55-105.

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===== March 29: Hideyoshi’s wars (presentation with Q&A)

Topics:

Reunifying Japan
Invading Korea

Readings:

John W. Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*, ch. 9 (“Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and the Pacification of the Daimyo”), pp. 142-59.

Ran (乱); directed by Kurosawa Akira (黒澤明) and starring Nakadai Tatsuya (仲代達矢).

Samurai Japan: A Journey Back in Time (dvd; Cromwell Productions, 2000).

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March 31: Class visit to Toyokuni Shrine, Hideyoshi’s grave, and the infamous *Mimizuka* (耳塚; “Mount of Ears”)

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April 5: An urban florescence and the voices of commoners (field-trip summation and presentation)

Topics:

Sakai

Osaka

Readings:

James L. McClain and Wakita Osamu, “Osaka across the Ages,” in McClain and Wakita, eds., *Osaka: The Merchants’ Capital of Early Modern Japan*, pp. 1-21.

V. Dixon Morris, “The City of Sakai and Urban Autonomy,” in George Elison and Bardwell L. Smith, eds., *Warlords, Artists, & Commoners: Japan in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 23-54.

Kumakura Isao, “Sen no Rikyū: Inquiries into His Life and Tea” (tr. Paul Varley), in Paul Varley and Kumakura Isao, eds., *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, pp. 33-69.

Sadler, A. L., *Cha-no-yu: The Japanese Tea Ceremony*, pp. 101-10.

Rikyū (利休), directed by Teshigahara Hiroshi (勅使河原宏), 1989.

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April 7: Hideyoshi’s Kyoto... (discussion with Q&A)

Topics:

The warrior’s footprint

Readings:

Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Hideyoshi*, ch. 7 (“The Pursuit of Legitimacy”), pp. 168-205, and pp. 228-36 only of ch. 8 (“The Last Years”).

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April 12: ...people’s Kyoto (presentation and on-the spot reports)

Topics:

The commoners' city
Enduring legacies

Readings:

Mary Elizabeth Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto*, ch. 4 ("Popular Insurrection"), pp.134-70.
James L. McClain, "The Gion Festival" (manuscript and images).

==== April 14: Reflections

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What did we learn?

The relationship between medieval culture and modern Japan
The contribution of *Medieval Kyoto • Medieval Japan* to a liberal education.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

In pursuit of the objectives enumerated at the beginning of this syllabus, *Medieval Kyoto • Medieval Japan* incorporates the following assignments and modes of assessment. Additional details about each undertaking will be announced at the appropriate time.

Q&A segments: As noted on the syllabus and class handouts, multiple class meetings combine a presentation with a question and answer segment. During the Q&A, students are expected to demonstrate engagement with the assigned readings and films by (•) asking pertinent questions designed to clarify complicated points and open up our understanding of that today's subject and (•) volunteering responses to the queries posed by others. In addition, each student will have an opportunity to conduct a Q&A or discussion segment (see below).

Discussion segments: During other meetings, time is set aside for conversations about specified issues (which will be announced in advance). Everyone should be prepared to participate fully in these discussions. In addition, each student will have an opportunity to co-lead a discussion.

Essay assignments: All students will complete a scholarly essay for each of the three major chronological divisions of the course. The three assignments include (a) a historical essay, (b) a critique of a film or work of fiction, and (c) an "on-the-spot report". The topics for the historical essay will be distributed in advance, and the responses should be approximately five pages in length. For one of the other sections of the course for which a student does not write a historical analysis, s/he is to submit a five-page critique of a film or work of fiction assigned for that section. For the remaining chronological division, teams of students will report to the class about a visit to a historical site of their choosing associated with the course and submit a three-page summary of the experience.

Field-trip summation: As specified in syllabus, we will embark on several field trips and discuss our experiences in the class meeting following the outing. Students will form teams to lead these discussions and then will submit a written review of the excursion, focusing on what it added to our understanding of the medieval epoch and Japan's historical experience.

Merit performance: Students who demonstrate acquisition of knowledge and mastery of the material beyond the norm and/or steadily improve their performance over the semester will receive extra consideration that amounts to a maximum of 5 percent of the course grade.

Course grade:

The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Quality of contributions to Q&A sessions:	20 percent
Quality of contributions to discussions:	25 percent
Historical essay	10 percent
Critique of film/work of fiction	10 percent
“On-the-spot” report	20 percent
Field-trip summations	10 percent
Merit consideration	5 percent

Alternative project:

Some of you may wish to propose an alternative project that serves to advance your own particular interest in medieval Japan. I welcome your suggestions in this regard.

Academic Code:

Students in this course are expected to adhere to the norms expressed in the Participation Agreement concerning the quality and originality of their work. If anyone has not yet done so, s/he should consult that document.

Accommodations:

Anyone who believes that s/he has a disability that requires accommodation should contact the appropriate official at his/her home institution or Columbia's Disability Services (disability@columbia.edu; 212-854-2388). Students who have an Accommodation Letter issued by the home institution or Columbia's Disability Services should contact the course instructor to discuss specific arrangements.