

Art History 371: Tradition and Transformation: Art and Visual Culture in Japan

Syllabus and Schedule - Winter 2008 Julia Sapin

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the arts and visual culture of Japan, with particular focus on the social, religious, and political circumstances in which they have been created over the past four millennia and how those changing circumstances have molded and been molded by visual culture. We will cover a lot of ground chronologically, but we will also zoom in to examine pockets of Japanese art history in greater depth. Through the close reading of six articles, we will address subjects such as the changing understanding of Japanese traditions, new perceptions of Japan's medieval military elite gained through conservatorial discoveries, and artistic activism in Japan.

My assessment of your achievement in the class will be based on 5 criteria: a blog, a midterm, a final, a novella, and classroom participation. Your blogs will chronicle your responses to the readings and class discussion, as well as give you a place to work out your ideas about the visual and literary material you are encountering. The midterm and final will be occasions for you to synthesize the course materials and demonstrate your comprehension of them. Writing an historical novella will give you a way to research a specific aspect of Japanese visual culture you find intriguing. Your participation in class will give me immediate feedback regarding your comprehension and interpretations of the subject matter.

My objective is for you to leave the course with an understanding of Japanese visual culture, grounding in some of the specific interpretations that have shaped the field of Japanese art history, and an increasingly refined ability to read critically and articulate your own ideas about what you have read. Good luck and let me know how I can help!

Required Readings

*Varley, Paul. *Japanese Culture*. 4th ed. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.

*Electronic readings available via Wilson Library's online service (access via "Course Reverses")

PLUS: choose one of the two following books:

*Dalby, Liza. *The Tale of Murasaki*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

OR

*Milton, Giles. *Samurai William: The Englishman who Opened Japan*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

Grading

Blog dialogues (6)	15%	60
Midterm	25%	100
Final	25%	100
Novella	25%	100
Class participation (attendance and discussion)	<u>10%</u>	<u>40</u>
Total	100%	400 points

Grade Scale

376-400=A	336-351=B	296-311=C	
360-375=A-	320-335=B-	280-295=C-	
352-359=B+	312-319=C+	240-279=D	239 and below=F

Chronology [per Paul Varley]:

Jomon Period: 10,000-300 BC	Muromachi Period: 1336-1568
Yayoi Period: 300 BC-300 AD	Momoyama Period: 1568-1615
Kofun Period: 300-552	Edo Period: 1615-1868
Asuka Period: 552-645	Meiji Era: 1868-1912
Hakuho Period: 645-710	Taisho Era: 1912-1926
Nara Period: 710-94	Showa Era: 1926-1989
Heian Period: 794-1185	Heisei Era: 1989-present
Kamakura Period: 1185-1333	

Lecture and Discussion Schedule/Reading Assignments:

Week 1 (1/8-10):	<p>Introduction to course material; basic analytical reading skills For Thursday: 1. Stephen Vlastos, "Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History," in <i>Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan</i>, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1-16.</p>
Week 2 (1/15-17):	<p>Japanese Origins (Jomon-Kofun periods): Lessons from Mythology and What the Tombs Tell Us Varley, 1-18. Discuss Novella Assignment</p>
Week 3 (1/22-24):	<p>Visualizing the Politics of Japanese Spirituality: The Introduction of Buddhism and Ise Shrine across Time Varley, 19-47. For Thursday: 2. Jonathan Reynolds, "Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition," <i>Art Bulletin</i> vol. 83 no. 2 (June 2001): 316-41.</p>

Week 4 (1/29-31):	Heian-Period Aesthetics and Culture: Then and Now Varley, 48-89. Discuss Dalby's Tale of Murasaki and Milton's Samurai William
Week 5 (2/5-7):	Zen and the Art of Samurai Patronage 2/ 5: First postings of novella Varley, 91-139. For Thursday: 3. Onishi Hiroshi, "Immortals and Sages: Paintings from the Ryoanji Temple." The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin (Summer 1993), 3-47.
Week 6 (2/12-14):	Midterm, Tuesday, 2/ 12 Facades of Power: Expressions of Authority in Castle Architecture Varley, 140-163. For Thursday: 4. William H. Coaldrake, "Castles: The Symbols and Substance of Momoyama and Early Edo Authority," in Architecture and Authority in Japan (London: Routledge,1996), 104-37.
Week 7 (2/19-21):	The Edo Period: Burgeoning of the Popular Arts Varley, 164-234.
Week 8 (2/26-28):	Facets of the "Floating World": The View from Woodblock Prints Second postings of novella
Week 9 (3/4-6):	Japan in the Modern World: New Artistic Constructs and Conflicts Varley, 235-303. For Tuesday: 5. Mark H. Sandler, "The Living Artist: Matsumoto Shunsuke's Reply to the State," Art Journal vol. 55 no. 3 (Fall 1996): 74-82.
Week 10 (3/11-13):	Into the Global Image Stream: New Japanese Art Forms Varley, 304-351. For Thursday: 6. Dorinda Neave, "Meditations on Space and Time: The Performance Art of Japan's Dumb Type," Art Journal vol. 60, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 84-95. Third postings of novella
Monday, March 17:	Final Exam, 8-10am