General
Japan’s *samurai* warriors constitute one of the distinct elements of pre-20th century Japanese society, culture, and government. They are still with us as a “ready-reference” in a number of contexts: anime samurai from outer space; samurai businessman; “Last Samurai;” the samurai spirit that infuses the martial arts; practitioners of the samurai ethos of *bushido* (death before defeat, self-sacrifice etc); and exponents of *hara-kiri* (*hari-kari* in incorrect English use).

The historical samurai class was a more nuanced entity. While a warrior class existed for nearly 1000 years (900s to late 1800s), for the vast bulk of this time Japan was at peace, and warriors only rarely died while fighting. The political position of the warrior class was also varied: prominent in rural areas in the 900s, it gradually acquired greater national political power, and after 1600 it monopolized national government. The social composition of the “warrior class” also changed, from rural land-managers and administrators, to members of a “warrior government” in the 1180s, to major cultural patrons from the 1300s, from hereditary families through the 1400s to being drawn from any social background by the late 1500s, to hereditary bureaucrats from the 1600s.

The samurai, in other words, was an evolving group. In this class we shall acquaint ourselves with some of that evolution, and also with some ways in which warriors (and commoners) reacted to the changes, in the medieval era (roughly 1150s-1600) when they were most involved in warfare.

Course Structure.

The course combines lectures and films. In addition to assigned readings designed to provide broader context, we will utilize a number of some film synopses to outline the main theme and to provide additional historical context.
In order to satisfactorily complete the course, in addition to attendance at class, students will need to allocate at least ten hours per week for completing reading assignments and to reviewing films that have been shown in class. Also, in my own experience, preparing a good film report can entail viewing a film at least three times, in order to clarify details. That is, writing the report requires good acquaintance with the film.

Evaluation.

All written work to be submitted is to be double spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font, and printed on only one side of the page.

1/ Attendance is required (15% of course grade).
2/ A First Quiz on 7/03 (20% of course grade).
3/ A 1200-word exploration of Conlan’s State of War (25% of course grade). Due no later than 7/09.
4/ A film report, on Ogress, Hidden Fortress, Seven Samurai, or Heaven and Earth. 4-5 pages in length (worth 20% course grade). The report is to focus on themes relating to warriors: warriors and society, warfare, or notions of honor, and is not a film review. See guidelines at end of syllabus. It is due no later than 7/15.
6/ A Second Quiz on 7/18 (20% of course grade). It will be based on course material covered since the first quiz, and compared to the first quiz will have more emphasis on the films.
7/ Failure to pass the Second Quiz is an automatic fail for the entire course.

Assigned Texts. Thomas Conlan, State of War.

Additional Readings. All potentially examinable. They will be available on Blackboard, under Course Documents.

Study Guides: Will be available at least one week in advance. They will be available on Blackboard, under Course Documents.

Synopses of Films: Guides to a number of the films will be available on Blackboard, under Course Documents.
ANTICIPATED LECTURE, FILM AND READING SCHEDULE.

WEEK ONE

6/24 Introduction; Jigokumon 地獄門 (Gate of Hell). [VT 06342; VT 00437; 86 mins.].
6/25 Rise of the Warrior Class and First the Bakufu (warrior government); Hōjō Shigetoki and the ethos of warrior leadership.
6/26 Illustrated Scroll of the Mongol Invasions; Fourteenth Century Warfare.
6/27 Onibaba 鬼婆 (The Ogress). (VT 05493; 104 mins).

Reading for Week One:

Conlan, State of War, chapters 1, 6.
A. Goble, “The Emergence of Wound Medicine in Medieval Japan.”

WEEK TWO

7/01 Warrior Loyalty.
Kakushi toride no san akunin 隠し砦の三悪人 (The Hidden Fortress) [DVD 01011; 139 mins.].
7/02 (cont.) Kakushi toride no san akunin 隠し砦の三悪人 (The Hidden Fortress).
7/03 First Quiz.
Villagers and villages in an age of instability.

7/04 Independence Day, no class.

Reading for Week Two

Conlan, State of War, chapters 1, 2, 3, 5.
WEEK THREE

7/08-Shichinin no samurai 七人の侍 (The Seven Samurai) [DVD 03041; (203 mins.).
7/09 (cont): Shichinin no samurai 七人の侍 (The Seven Samurai).
                Conlan report due.
7/10-Warlords and governing;
The Takeda.
7/11-Ten to chi to 天と地と (Heaven and Earth). [VT 06718, 104 mins.].

Reading for Week Three

Conlan, State of War, chapters 4 and 6.
C. Steenstrup, “Hōjō Sōun’s Twenty-One Articles: The Code of Conduct of the
Odawara Hōjō.”

WEEK FOUR

7/15-Film report due
Warrior exuberance: armor, castles, paintings;
Ending warfare: the unifiers.
7/16-The Peace Dividend: Reshaping the Samurai.
Harakiri 切腹 (Ritual Suicide). [VT 06739; 134 mins.].
7/17 (cont) Harakiri 切腹 (Ritual Suicide).
7/18-Second Quiz.

Reading for Week Four

Conlan, State of War, chapters 7 and 8.
M.E. Berry, “Public Peace and Private Attachment.”

HIST 396– SAMURAI IN FILM
GUIDE FOR FILM REPORT AND BOOK EXPLORATION

We will go over these assignments in class as well.

**Film Report.**

There are several ways in which you can craft a film report. In this course, the emphasis is on your writing a report that demonstrates clear familiarity with the film; and that you have reflected on some of the themes or issues relating to samurai and warfare. Please remember that the class is not one on film or film history; and that the film report is **NOT** a film review that deals with directors, cinema technique, and suchlike (a report that forgets this is headed for an “F” grade).

The report could emphasize a particular theme that comes through in the film, or even a couple of themes. The **least desirable** film report, which being such is not to be submitted (and if so might well receive a grade of “F”’) is one that provides a synopsis of the film – after all, we’ve seen it.

Feel free to inform your report with ideas and general information that you may have encountered in the readings, although this is not required in order to write a successful report.

*Book exploration* of Thomas Conlan, *State of War.*

This book exploration will be a different effort than a film report.

Rather than present an overview of the book as a whole, or of some individual chapters, you ought focus your attention on a theme or themes in which you have an interest, and/or which suggest themselves from the content. Some themes that come to mind are: loyalty and the warrior ethos; organization of warrior society; warfare, weapons and tactics.

**Please note:** the report needs to demonstrate that you are familiar with and have thought about the material. You also need to engage a substantial amount, not just a few pages or one chapter.