HISTORY OF EAST ASIAN MARTIAL ARTS  
HIST 319/ASIAN 391  
TJ Hinrichs  
Cornell University — Fall 2006  
(First offered as an ExEAS course at Columbia University in Spring 2004.)

Exploration of the social, political, and cultural contexts of martial arts practice, and historical dynamics behind their transmission, transformation, and spread. Examination of the emergence of martial artists as popular figures, and martial arts as distinct sets of practices in China and Japan. Study of the modern re-invention of these practices, and of their transmission to other parts of the world. Investigation of a local martial arts school, and of the question, “What is East Asian about East Asian martial arts in Ithaca?”

Requirements

**Attendance and Participation**  
25%  
Students should come to class prepared to discuss and ask questions about the readings assigned for that week. Preparation includes thinking about the study questions on the syllabus. I may call on you to summarize the main points of a particular reading, or to give your thoughts on a study question. While reading, take notes on and make sure that you understand the Key Terms (to be posted on WebCT). Students can miss up to three unexcused classes without penalty, but are responsible for getting class notes and for thinking about the material discussed in class.

**Short Essays (8)**  
40%  
2-4 pages. See syllabus for due dates. Topics will be posted on WebCT. In cases of illness or unforeseen emergencies, contact me as soon as possible to arrange makeup.

**Field Trip & Field Trip Essay**  
10%  
I will organize and lead at least two trips to local martial arts schools. You may also visit a school on your own; you will need to discuss and clear this with me if you do so. You should take thorough notes based on observations during the field trip. In class we will discuss the types of things that you might want to look for and the types of questions you might want to ask. Essay: 3-5 pages. Due one week after field trip, to be based on field trip observations, connecting these to the larger issues of the course.

**Final Essay**  
25%  
10-12 pages.

All essays should be submitted in hard copy, 12 point type, double spaced, one-inch margins, and with footnotes with proper citation formats. Limited extensions will be granted if requested in advance. Late papers will be docked 1/3 grade/day.

All classroom behavior should be characterized by civility, attentiveness, and respect. All coursework should be performed with integrity. Plagiarism or cheating will result in an F and will be reported to the dean. I expect you to know what plagiarism and cheating are, and how to avoid them. See <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm> and <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html> for more information.
Books Available on Reserve and at the Book Store


Guide to Readings Bullets

- Available on Reserve and at Book Store
  - Available online (WebCT, ERESERVE, EBOOK, EJOURNAL)

Week I: Orientations

What is a martial art? What is East Asian about martial arts?

Why do the instructors and students in Thomas Green’s martial arts school consider its history important? In what ways do they connect history to their practice and to their views of themselves and the school? In what ways and why do they change the emphases of the histories that they tell?

By heading one of his sections “The System’s History: One Construction,” Green treats the historical account given there not as a record of historical facts whose veracity needs to be checked, but as something else. (See Key Terms on WebCT.) What does he mean by "construction"? Why is the historical veracity of the facts in the historical construction not so relevant to Green?

Readings (read for Wednesday):


Classes:

1. What is a Martial Art? What is East Asia? August 28
2. Narrative and the Martial Arts August 30
Week II: Martial Heroes in Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Fiction

What are the different types of martial characters portrayed in these works of fiction? What types of martial skills do they possess? What values do they exemplify or invert?

Readings:


Classes:

3. Bandit Heroes September 4
4. Immortals, Gods, and Women September 6

Week III: Samurai Legends

What are the roles of the samurai characters in Tale of the Heike? What types of martial arts skills do they possess? What values do they exemplify? In what ways does this change between the Warring States Period (Tale of Heike) and the Edo (Chushingura)? In what ways do the values exemplified (or inverted) by martial heroes in Japanese Warring States and Edo fiction compare or contrast to those of Ming fiction?

Readings:


Classes:

5. Samurai in War September 11
6. Duels and Honor September 13
   Short Essay #1 due
Week IV: The Social Background of “Pugilists”/“Boxers” in Late Imperial China

What are the various social backgrounds of people who practiced and wrote about martial arts in sixteenth to nineteenth century China? What sorts of arts did they practice? How does this compare to the martial heroes of Ming fiction? In what ways might different social backgrounds affect approaches to martial arts practice?

Readings:


Classes:

7. Wen (Civil), Wu (Martial), and Polity September 18

8. Wen, Wu, and Social Class September 20

Week V: The Social Background of Samurai in Warring States Japan

How did samurai emerge as a distinct social group? How did their social roles and position change through time? In what ways did these changes affect their martial practice? Consider the ways in which the social backgrounds of Japanese samurai contrast with that of Chinese “pugilists” or “boxers.”

Readings:


Classes:

9. The Rise of the Samurai September 25

10. The Rise of the Sword September 27
    Short Essay #2 due

Week VI: Lineage, Transmission, and Legitimacy

What models for martial arts lineages do we find in China and in Japan? In what ways are they different? How do principles and practices of kinship translate to martial arts lineages? In what ways do lineages shape transmission (learning) of martial arts? In what ways do they shape legitimacy of transmission?


Classes:
11. The Social Construction of Kinship October 2
12. Lineage and Transmission October 4
   Short Essay #3 due

Week VII: Buddhism and the Martial Arts — China

In general, Buddhism prohibits the taking of any sentient life. How, then, did Buddhism come to have a role in East Asian martial arts? What was this role in the specific contexts described by these different readings?

Many of the secondary readings for this week and next discuss the development of mythologies about relationships between Buddhism and martial arts. What accounts for this development?

Readings:


Classes:
FALL BREAK — NO CLASSES October 9
13. History and Myth October 11
Week VIII: Buddhism and Martial Arts — Japan

To what extent was there a connection between Buddhism and martial arts in Japan, and what was it? What led to the overemphasis of this connection? Otake Risuke, a modern representative of the Katori Shinto lineage, includes Esoteric Buddhist elements in his teachings. How do these practices relate to Katori Shinto Ryu practice? What does this suggest for martial artists’ particular interests in Esoteric Buddhism?

Readings:


Classes:

14. Zen  October 16

15. Esoteric Buddhism in Japanese martial arts  October 18

Short Essay #4 due

Week IX: Peacetime Warriors, Wartime Literati

What were the roles of the Samurai during the centuries of the Edo, when they were not at war? How did this affect the practice and transmission of martial arts? In what ways did the contexts of martial arts practice change in nineteenth century China? What were the historical conditions that provoked these changes?

Readings:

- Japan: Hurst, Armed Martial Arts of Japan, pp. 53-100, 125-143.

- China: Wile, T’ai-chi’s Ancestors, pp. 37-81, [82-188].

- China: Wile, “Social and Historical Background of T’ai-chi Ch’üan in the Nineteenth Century,” Lost T’ai-chi Classics from the Late Ch’ing Dynasty, pp. 3-30.
Classes:

16. Warrior-Bureaucrats October 23
17. Literati-Martial Artists October 25
   Short Essay #5 due

**Week X: Modernity and the Invention of Traditions — Japan**

What is “the invention of traditions”? How is this related to modernity and nationalism? In what ways did samurai re-invent themselves and the martial arts after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate? In what ways is this different from the re-invention of the samurai in earlier periods, such as in the transition from the Warring States to peacetime Edo?

**Readings:**


Classes:

18. National Myth and Samurai Survival October 30
19. Modern Martial Arts: Kendo and Judo November 1

**Week XI: Modernity and the Invention of Traditions — China**

What were the particular conditions in China that shaped the re-invention of martial arts traditions? Is it different from the types of myth-making we saw in earlier weeks, for example with the Shaolin Temple? Is it different from the reinvention of martial arts in Japan?

**Readings:**


Classes:

20. “Invented Traditions” and Modernity November 6
21. National Skills in Republican China November 8
   Short Essay #6 due
Week XII: Globalization

Globalization is usually thought of in terms of the spread of European and American culture to other countries. In East Asian martial arts, of course, we see different flows. In what ways have processes of modernization and globalization changed the ways in which games or sports are practiced and organized, and the ways in which they are associated with ethnicity, nationality or class? Do we see similar dynamics in the martial arts? Are East Asian martial arts still “East Asian” when they are practiced outside of East Asia? What has motivated people outside East Asia to practice martial arts? What has motivated people from East Asia to teach martial arts in other countries, to people whom they would not consider “East Asian”?

Readings:


Classes:

22. Nation, Colonialism, Diaspora, and Identity
   November 13

23. The Global and the Local
    Short Essay #7 due

Movie Night: “Seven Samurai”
Week XIII: Japanese “Period” Film

What different types of martial arts figures are portrayed in Japanese cinema? What values do they exemplify? How do these compare to the earlier fiction that we read and discussed?

Readings:


Classes:

24. “Period” Film November 20
25. Kurosawa November 22

Movie Night: “Chinese Connection”

Week XIV: Chinese Martial Arts Film and Video Games

What different types of martial arts figures are portrayed in Chinese cinema? What values do they exemplify? How do these compare to the earlier fiction that we read and discussed? In what ways have the medium of film and technical advances shaped imaginations of martial arts? What are the various ways in which authenticity is constructed in the context of film? [Readings on gender to be split.]

Readings:


Classes:

26. Wuxia and Kung Fu Film; Gender November 27
27. Gender and Film Short Essay #8 due November 29