

The Tale of The Heike & Early Medieval Japan

Schedule

as of March 29, 2026

Days and Time: Mondays, (Time)_____ April 20, April 27, May 11, May 18, May 25, June 1, June 8, June 15

Place: _____

Lecturer: MUTO Mieko (PhD)

If you have questions, please feel free to contact MUTO Mieko at: polyhymnia@gol.com

	Date	Theme	Episodes, and topics	Video footage /YouTube
1	April 20	Prologue: The Jetavana Temple	The bell of Jetavana Temple tells us of the impermanence of life. The epic drama of the Heike family, an embodiment of transitoriness, begins its tale.	How the Tale was chanted to the Biwa lute
2	April 27	Gentle-hearted Emperor Takakura	The 80 th Emperor Takakura was very fond of colored leaves of Autumn. One morning, his leaves were all gone. Daily life of an emperor, or of noblemen and ladies in the palace	Love story of the Emperor and lady Kogo. Musical instruments.
3	May 11	Priest Shunkan in exile	Three conspirators against the Heike were exiled. Two of them were pardoned, but Priest Shunkan alone had to be left on the island.	Recitation of the text of the despair of Shunkan
4	May 18	Steeds & manners of battles Sanemori	In this era, battles were fought one-on-one by the riders. The Tale has quite a few episodes on horses. Battlefields are performing stage of riders, and they wore armors of meticulous works of art. An old warrior went to his last battle, dyeing his white hair into black	How to don the armor. The battle of Ichi-no-Tani (going down a dangerously steep hill on horseback)/ Noh play entitled Sanemori

5	May 25	Women in the Tale	Widowed Empress was asked by a younger new Emperor to re-marry him. / A female general fought fiercely with enemy. Her husband did not want her to die in the battle/ A wife of Taira no Michimori killed herself when she heard of death of her beloved husband. / Yokobue's lover became a monk when his marriage was denied by his parents. Yokobue ran after him but he rejected to see her. Heart-broken, she, too, became a nun. / SenjunoMae was asked to take care of a captive general of Heike. She fell in love with him, and after he was executed, she became nun and prayed for him for the rest of her life.	
6	June 1	Flight from the capital & Taira no Koremori	The Heike people gave up the capital. Bidding farewells, and burning their residences, they set out on their flight to the west. Koremori, a direct descent of Kiyomori, the head of the family, deserted the battlefield to see his family again, but without seeing them, he killed himself in the sea.	Traditional imperial court dances of the Left and the Right (we will watch two kinds of colorful dances)
7	June 8	Battles between Genji and the Heike	A young Genji warrior was ordered to shoot a swaying fan in the far distance: he must hit the fan or he will die. He prayed to god and shot an arrow. Though incapable a man the second Chief of the family was, the Heike people followed him to the end of their lives.	Attacks by Yoshitsune, a war genius. The 81 st Emperor, at the age of 6, sank down to the bottom of the sea
8	June 15	Epilogue	GoShirakawa-In visited Empress Mother, who outlived her son, and she looked back upon her life, which was like the cycle of reincarnation in the six realms of existence. The last on the bloodline of Kiyomori was killed, but the bloodline of the victor, Minamoto no Yoritomo, too, was extinct only 50 years later.	

Lecturer: MUTO Mieko

BA and MA in History of Art, from Waseda University, Tokyo

MBA from University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK

PhD from the Institute of Japanese Studies at Hosei University, Tokyo

(Specialization: Japanese classic literature)