

A background image showing two samurai in traditional armor. The samurai on the left is in profile, facing right, wearing a helmet with a crest and a large, segmented chest plate. The samurai on the right is facing forward, also in armor, with a helmet and a chest plate. The image is in a dark, monochromatic style.

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HIST 291 002: The Samurai

The legendary swordsman, the ultimate warrior, fighter for honor and loyalty above all else. Such is the popular image of the Japanese samurai.

But who were the samurai, and were they really better than bloody killers?

We will study the history of Japan and the life & battles of the samurai; and we will also explore how the samurai have endured as global pop culture icons that slash their way through our movies, games, and cultural imaginations.