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Suicide Through the Eyes of Yukio Mishima

Presenter: Donald Prellwitz

Faculty Mentor: Michelle Low

Abstract: Suicide has been romanticized throughout Japanese history as a way of expressing one's nature. According to Samurai Law and the Bushido Code, suicide known as Seppuku was often performed to display to the highest extent one's own loyalty and honor to their lord. In post-war Japan, suicide lost much of its glamour. However, obsessed with Samurai culture, esteemed writer and film-maker Yukio Mishima resurrected the romance and mystery of the old world and emphasized the neo-Confucian ideals of honor and loyalty; once again a romantic view of suicide was reinstated. Through an analysis of Yukio Mishima's writings, film, and his final moments, this paper discusses the evolution of suicide from medieval to contemporary Japan and its affect on the modern concept of suicide.