

2019 Seminar: Reflections on Training and Testing

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The 2019 annual Ohio seminar brought teachers, students, and friends together from Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Canada for a remarkable four-day training event concentrated on ground techniques, iaijutsu, and tameshigiri. Each study session afforded students countless opportunities to observe demonstrations, dissect movements, and practice each application in a community setting that offered nearly two centuries of collective classical martial arts experience. Similar to any passionate endeavor and its intricacies, koryu bujutsu requires commitment, patience, and time to sharpen combative skills, refine individual character, and understand Japanese traditions. Training in an environment amongst like-minded koryu practitioners is an excellent way to shape techniques, ask questions, apply feedback, and build camaraderie. This year's seminar facilitated the aforementioned, while hosting an outstanding group of teachers, students, and friends who are committed to helping one another flourish.



Another layer added to the seminar was testing. Multiple individuals challenged themselves to present specific material that underpinned competency in their craft. Success or failure in testing is irrelevant, as applied feedback from either outcome is what hones skills and polishes character. Arguably, training is more important than testing, because dedication to the former is the test: the repeated test of determination, discovery, and humility. The reward for a steady regime of training, however large or small, is improvement, and with continual improvement comes success. Ultimately, success is a byproduct of self-reflection during focused training sessions, time invested in training, and individual goals set before training opportunities; if any are lacking then an objective self-assessment almost certainly would yield the need for attention in one or more of the three areas. Contestably, exemplifying techniques is not a singular event to strive for on an annual or biannual basis; instead, implementing instructor feedback over multiple repetitions in daily training sessions is what exhibits advancements in bujutsu skills and adds clarity to the budo journey. In summation, hard work supported by guidance from teachers is what develops the mind, body, and spirit to advance koryu skills and radiate success when seniors and training partners are watching.