



Japanese Culture in a Global World

JAPA 310 – Fall 2017

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00PM – 4:15PM
Robinson Hall A247

Every April, Washington holds its world-renowned Cherry Blossom Festival, a celebration with deep roots in the long and tumultuous friendship between the United States and Japan. Although Americans are presented with enticing images of Japan as a country of blooming cherry trees and colorful kimono on one hand and high-tech robots and digital pocket monsters on the other, the reality of contemporary Japan is much more fascinating, especially since the threads that form the fabric of Japanese society are so closely interwoven with those of our own history and culture.

This course presents an overview of Japanese society in the twenty-first century with a special emphasis on the myriad roles Japan plays on an international stage. We will begin by considering how the political legacies of the twentieth century have shaped Japan's relationships with other nations before turning our attention to vocal special-interest groups who have come to the attention of Japanese and foreign news media during the past two decades. We will then consider gender and the environment, two major international social issues that have exerted a strong influence on Japanese domestic policies. Finally, we will examine Japanese popular culture and the economic "soft power" it wields. By the end of the semester, students will possess a broad knowledge of contemporary Japan that will allow them to better understand and interpret how social and cultural identities are constructed and challenged in a global world.

Course Attributes:

Global Understanding, Non-Western Culture, Undergraduate Upper Division

Instructor

Kathryn Hemmann

khemmann@gmail.com

Aquia Building Room 326

office hours by appointment (to be requested in writing via email)

Grading and Assignments

Unit Quizzes: 50%

Take-Home Exam: 30%

Participation: 20%

Unit Quizzes

There will be a quiz on the final day of each of the five course units. Each quiz will last approximately fifteen minutes and will feature three to five term definitions and one or two short answer questions. Each quiz will test all material covered in its respective unit, including the reading assigned for the day of the quiz. If a student misses a quiz for any reason, he or she will be required to schedule a make-up quiz before the next class meeting.

Quizzes will be given on the following days:

September 14

September 28

October 17

October 31

November 16

Take-Home Exam

The take-home exam will take the form of seven to ten short answer questions and two or three essay questions. The short answer questions should be answered in a paragraph, while the essay questions should be answered in at least three paragraphs. Students will be able to complete the exam using the knowledge they have gained from the course readings and discussions, but outside academic research is permitted provided that it is sufficiently documented. That being said, answers that are clearly the result of an online search will not receive credit. The exam questions will be distributed on the final day of class. The completed exam must be submitted digitally via email by no later than **4:15PM on Thursday, December 14**. Although early submissions are encouraged, no submissions will be accepted after the deadline.

Participation

Students are expected to complete all required reading assignments and to be attentive during class lectures and discussions. Repeated lack of preparation will significantly lower the participation grade, as will a demonstrated lack of respect for the instructor or the other students.

If a student is uncomfortable or otherwise unable to speak in class, alternate methods of performance evaluation can be arranged through a consultation with the Office of Disability Services. To clarify how the class participation grade works, I have created the following rubric:

- A – Strong participation, speaks at least once or twice during each class.
- B – Fair participation, speaks perhaps once or twice a week.
- C – Minimal participation, does not speak but attends class.
- D – Poor participation, does not speak or attend class regularly.
- F – No participation, does not attend class.

Course Policies

Required Readings

There is no textbook for this class. All required readings will be available as downloadable PDF files on the course site on Blackboard. Students are strongly encouraged to print out a copy of each reading and bring it with them to the appropriate class.

Attendance

Each student is allowed **two unexcused absences**, no questions asked and no excuses necessary. If you would like to excuse an absence, you must submit at least one form of written proof of legitimacy (photocopies and printouts are fine). If your documents are not submitted **within three days** of your absence, they become forfeit. Each unexcused absence after the second will result in half a letter grade being deduced from the student's final course grade.

Technology

Tablets are permitted in their capacity as e-readers, but **smartphones and laptop computers are absolutely not allowed** without a formal letter from the Office of Disability Services.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to abide by the Mason Honor Code. No instances of cheating, plagiarization, stealing, or lying in matters related to academic work will be tolerated.

Respect

As in any class dealing with media and contemporary social issues, students may find that the course material is directly pertinent to their lives, and a respectful attitude is an absolute necessity. No speech demonstrating or encouraging discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, body shape, or disability will be tolerated. Content warnings will be provided upon request.

August 29 (Tuesday)

Course Outline and Structure

August 31 (Thursday)

Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Appropriation

Yoshio Sugimoto, "The Japan Phenomenon and the Social Sciences," pp.1-36
from *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (2010)

UNIT ONE: HISTORY

September 5 (Tuesday)

The "Rich Nation and Strong Army" of the Meiji Period

Andrew Gordon, "Empire and Domestic Order," pp.115-137
from *A Modern History of Japan from Tokugawa Times to the Present* (2003)

September 7 (Thursday)

The Roaring Teens of the Taishō Period

Sally A. Hastings, "Traveling to Learn, Learning to Read: Japanese Women as American College Students, 1900-1941," pp.193-208
from *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan* (2013)

September 12 (Tuesday)

The Smithsonian Exhibition of the Enola Gay

Lawrence S. Wittner, "The Enola Gay, the Atomic Bomb and American War Memory"
from *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2005)
http://www.japanfocus.org/-Lawrence_S_-Wittner/1777

September 14 (Thursday)

The Controversies Surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine
+ QUIZ ONE

James Mark Shields, "Revisioning a Japanese Spiritual Recovery through Manga: Yasukuni and the Aesthetics and Ideology of Kobayashi Yoshinori's 'Gomanism'"
from *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 47:7 (2013)
<http://www.japanfocus.org/-James-Shields/4031>

UNIT TWO: SOCIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

September 19 (Tuesday)

Japan's Aging Society

Yoshio Sugimoto, "Geographical and Generational Variations," pp.72-87
from *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (2010)

September 21 (Thursday)

Ethnic Minority Groups and Race in a Raceless Society

Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Yearning for Lightness: Transnational Circuits in the Marketing and Consumption of Skin Lightness," pp.281-302
from *Gender & Society* 22:3 (2008)

September 26 (Tuesday)

New Religious Movements

Levi McLaughlin, "Did Aum Change Everything? What Soka Gakkai Before, During, and After the Aum Shinrikyō Affair Tells Us About the Persistent 'Otherness' of New Religions in Japan," pp.51-75
from *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 39:1 (2012)

September 28 (Thursday)

Parasite Singles, Hikikomori, and Other Problem Children
+ QUIZ TWO

Tamaki Saitō, "What Is Social Withdrawal?," pp.17-29
from *Hikikomori: Adolescence without End* (2013)

UNIT THREE: GENDER

October 3 (Tuesday)

Feminism in Japan

Ayako Kano, "Backlash, Fight Back, and Back-Pedaling: Responses to State Feminism in Japan," pp.41-62
from *International Journal of Asian Studies* 8:1 (2011)

October 5 (Thursday)

Dangerous Schoolgirls

Sharon Kinsella, "The Surveillance of Financial Deviancy," pp.88-106
from *Schoolgirls, Money and Rebellion in Japan* (2014)

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October 10 (Tuesday)

NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY

October 12 (Thursday)

Constructions of Motherhood

Anne Allison, "Japanese Mothers and *Obentōs*: The Lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus," pp.81-103

from *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan* (2000)

October 17 (Tuesday)

Queer Sexualities in Japan

+ QUIZ THREE

Mark McLelland, "Just Like a Girl: Images of Homosexual Men as Feminine," pp.43-60

from *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities* (2000)

UNIT FOUR: ENVIRONMENT

October 19 (Thursday)

The Kyoto Protocol and Environmental Pollution

Ken'ichi Miyamoto, "Japanese Environmental Policy: Lessons from Experience and Remaining Problems," pp.231-249

from *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power* (2013)

October 24 (Tuesday)

Regionalism and "Not In My Back Yard" Waste Disposal

Kate O'Neill, "Radioactive 'Trade': Globalizing the Nuclear Fuel Cycle," pp.157-168

from *SAIS Review* 22:1 (2002)

October 26 (Thursday)

Anti-Nuclear Protest Movements

Nicola Liscutin, "Indignez-Vous! 'Fukushima,' New Media and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Japan"

from *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2011)

<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Nicola-Liscutin/3649>

October 31 (Tuesday)

Environmental Issues in Mass Media

+QUIZ FOUR

Christine L. Marran, "Beyond Domesticating Animal Love," pp.39-50

from *Mechademia 6: User Enhanced* (2011)

UNIT FIVE: POPULAR CULTURE

November 2 (Thursday)

International Cinema

Valerie Wee, "Visual Aesthetics and Ways of Seeing: Comparing *Ringu* and *The Ring*,"
pp.41-60
from *Cinema Journal* 50:2 (2011)

November 7 (Tuesday)

The Music Industry

Michael Bourdaghs, "The Japan that Can 'Say Yes': Bubblegum Music in a Postbubble
Economy," pp.195-222
from *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop* (2012)

November 9 (Thursday)

Cultures of Cuteness

Christine R. Yano, "Marketing Global Kitty: Strategies to Sell Friendship and 'Happiness,'"
pp.84-105
from *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific* (2013)

November 14 (Tuesday)

Media Piracy

Ian Condry, "Dark Energy: What Overseas Fans Reveal about the Copyright Wars," pp.161-184
from *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story* (2013)

November 16 (Thursday)

Otaku Media and Orientalism

+ QUIZ FIVE

Susan J. Napier, "Differing Destinations: Cultural Identification, Orientalism, and 'Soft Power' in
Twenty-First-Century Anime Fandom," pp.169-190
from *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West*
(2007)

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November 21 (Tuesday)

November 23 (Thursday)

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

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UNIT SIX: SPECIAL TOPICS

November 28 (Tuesday)
November 30 (Thursday)
Special Topic #1

December 5 (Tuesday)
December 7 (Thursday)
Special Topic #2

Course material to be decided by the class. A written survey will be conducted on Tuesday, November 7, and we will discuss the results at the beginning of class the following Thursday. The updated schedule will be distributed on Tuesday, November 14.

Options will include readings related to cultural nostalgia, divorce, education, mass media, organized crime, youth crime, technology, tourism, urban legends, and so on.

Student suggestions are welcome and encouraged.

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Final exam questions will be distributed on Thursday, December 8.

- ☐ Ideally, you should be able to complete the exam in three hours.
- ☐ Please include all of your answers in one document.
- ☐ Make sure to put your name on the front page of the document.
- ☐ If you have any questions, please contact me before noon on the due date.

The deadline for submission of the final exam is **4:15PM on Thursday, December 14.**

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