Japan: Its Culture and Heritage (AEAJ 170)

University at Albany, Spring 2018
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This course surveys major themes in the study of Japanese culture and heritage. By drawing upon primary sources from literature, film, drama, visual culture and music, as well as secondary perspectives from the fields of history, religious studies, anthropology, literature and sociology, this course aims to present a historical narrative for the development of Japanese culture from early civilization to the present day, while also introducing elements such as women’s history and ethnic minorities that challenge and complicate that narrative. Students will use elements of this narrative, as well as their own insights, to juxtapose their own engagement with Japanese culture with other outside and inside perspectives. This course fulfills the General Education categories of International Perspectives and Humanities. This class utilizes English-language translations of all sources; no knowledge of Japanese required.

Course Requirements & Policies

GRADING: Your performance in this course will be evaluated on the A-E scale. The grading breakdown is as follows:

- Attendance and Participation: 25%
- Quizzes: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Final Exam: 30%

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY: Students must inform the instructor prior to class if they need to miss a class. It goes without saying that “attendance” here implies attending to the course in a manner that involves more than mere physical presence: students must be alert and engaged. *A student’s final, total grade in the class will be penalized by a third of a grade (i.e. from B to B-) after his or her fifth unexcused absence, and an additional third of a grade with each unexcused absence thereafter.

CLASS PREPARATION: Students are expected to complete the reading assignments before coming to class. Please bring your reading assignments to class so that you can reference them during discussion. You may bring them in e-form, but you must view them on a device other than your phone. You are also expected to bring a writing utensil for in-class writing assignments.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: I request that any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations speak with me during the first two weeks
of class. All discussions will remain confidential. For more information, please visit Disability Resource Center. Their website is available here: http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Any use of work produced by another person without proper citation is plagiarism, and is a violation of the academic code of honesty. The instructor reserves the right to dismiss from the course any student that is caught cheating on an assignment or plagiarizing the work of another person. Please see the university's policies for academic regulations for more info: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT: You may not use any electronic equipment in class for any purpose, other than engaging in the course (i.e. note-taking, reading course materials, etc.). If you are expecting a call that you absolutely must take, please inform me prior to class.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


NOTE: Additional reading assignments will be distributed via blackboard.

Course Schedule

NOTE: This schedule of topics and readings may be subject to adjustments throughout the quarter.

January 24: Introduction

January 26: What is “Japan”? What is “Culture”? What is “Heritage”?
Harumi Befu, “Concepts of Japan, Japanese culture and the Japanese”

Syllabus Quiz

January 29: Early Japan

January 31: Japanese Mythology

February 2: Shinto

Map and Era Chart Quiz

February 5: Buddhism in Japan
Addiss et. al., eds., 21-26.
De Bary et. al., eds., 100-106, 120-121.

February 7: Development of Japanese Writing & Heian Literary Forms
Addiss et. al., eds., 26-48.
Hugh Clarke, “Language”
February 9: *The Tale of Genji*

February 12: Heian Period Music and Theater & the Development of Japanese Aesthetics
Addiss et. al., eds., 48-80.

February 14: Kamakura/Muromachi Period: *The Tales of Heike*
Addiss et. al., eds., 81-90.
*The Tales of Heike*, selection

February 16: Kamakura/Muromachi Period: Music and Theater
Addiss et. al., eds., 111-128.

February 19: Edo Politics, Class System, Basho
Addiss et. al., eds., 137-151.
Matsuo, Basho, *The Narrow Road to the Interior* (1702), selection

February 21: Codes of Honor and the 47 Ronin
Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure*, selection

February 23: Edo Period Prose Literature
Ueda, Akinari, *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* (1776), selection
Ihara Saikaku, *Japan’s Eternal Storehouse* (1688), selection

February 26: Edo Period Music and Theater
Addiss et. al., eds., 193-224.

February 28: Zen and Tea
Addiss et. al., eds., 129-136

March 2: Meiji Restoration, Fukuzawa Yukichi
Fukuzawa, “An Exhortation to Learning” (1872), selection

March 5: **MIDTERM EXAM**

March 7: Natsume Soseki:
“The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan” (1911)

March 9: Taisho Japan, Modernism in Art and Architecture
Gardner, William, “Media and Modernism”

**March 12 – March 18: Spring Break**

March 19: Rise of Japanese Film
Tanizaki, Jun’ichiro, “The Present and Future of Moving Pictures” (1917)

March 21: Modernist Literature
Yokomitsu, Riichi, “Machine” (1931)

March 23: Japanese Imperialism
Koizumi Kikue, “Manchu Girl” (1938)

March 26: Japanese Experience of War
Selden, Mark. “Japanese and American War Atrocities, Historical Memory and Reconciliation:
“World War II to Today”
Sakaguchi, Ango. "The Idiot" (1947)
March 28: Wartime Responsibility and Rethinking "Japan"
  "Humanity Declaration" (1946)
  Hara, Tamiki. "Summer Flower" (1949)
March 30: The American Occupation through Literature and Film
  Oe, Kenzaburo, "Prize Stock" (1958)

April 2: Easter (No Class)
April 4: Atomic Impacts
  In-class screening: Honda, Ishiro. Godzilla (1954) pt. 1
April 6: Atomic Impacts
  In-class screening: Honda, Ishiro. Godzilla (1954) pt. 2

April 9: Two Nobel Prize Speeches
  Kawabata, Yasunari, "Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself" (1968)
  Oe, Kenzaburo, "Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself" (1994)
April 11: Golden Age of Japanese Film
  In-class screening: Kurosawa, Akira. Rashomon (1950) pt. 1
April 13: Golden Age of Japanese Film
  In-class screening: Kurosawa, Akira. Rashomon (1950) pt. 2

April 16: Post-Postwar Japan: Olympics, Japan Expo, and the Bubble
April 18: The Shojo
  In-class screening: Somai, Shinji. Sailor Suit and Machine Gun (1981), pt. 1
April 20: The Shojo
  In-class screening: Somai, Shinji. Sailor Suit and Machine Gun (1981), pt. 2

April 23: Shojo, Kawaii Culture, and Female Consumption
  Kinsella, Sharon. "Cuties in Japan."
April 25: Anime
  In-class Screening: Shinkai Makoto. Your Name (2016), pt. 1
April 27: Anime
  In-class Screening: Shinkai Makoto. Your Name (2016), pt. 2

April 30: Japan as Minority Space
  Hideo Aoki, "Buraku Culture"
May 2: Legacy of Manga and Rise of Otaku
  Craig Norris, "Manga, anime and visual art culture"
May 4: Cool Japan
  Douglas McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool"

May 7: Japan in the World
May 9: Final Exam Review