



Introduction to Japanese Culture

JAPA 240 Fall 2018

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00PM – 4:15PM

Location TBA

This introductory survey class covers Japanese history, culture, and society from prehistory until the present day. It is designed to familiarize students with fundamental aspects of Japanese culture that inform contemporary viewpoints and social issues. Students will learn important dates, people, and events as they acquire the skills to read a range of texts and documents within their historical contexts.

In this class we will investigate the concept of “Japanese culture” and how it is created, recreated, and canonized. We will examine various political, economic, and religious systems with our twenty-first century bias, but we will also attempt to imagine how these systems were perceived by their contemporaries. Our understanding of history will be augmented and challenged by our reading of historical documents and literary and religious texts. The ultimate goal of this course is to provide a foundation of basic knowledge about Japan that will serve as a springboard for future engagement with the nation, its people, and its cultural legacy.

Instructor Information

Dr. Kathryn Hemmann
khemmann@gmail.com
Aquia Building Room 326

Course Texts

Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture* (4th Edition)
ISBN: 0824821521

Naoko Takeuchi, *Sailor Moon*, Vol. 1
ISBN: 1935429744

Masashi Kishimoto, *Naruto*, Vol. 1
ISBN: 1569319006

Grading and Assignments

Four Quizzes: 40%
Take-Home Exam: 30%
Class Presentation: 15%
Participation: 15%

Four Quizzes

There will be four short quizzes, with one every three weeks (excluding the first and final weeks of class). 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 the material covered in class since the last quiz, including the reading assigned for the day of the quiz. If a student misses a quiz for any reason, they will be required to schedule a make-up quiz before the next class meeting.

Quizzes will be given on the following Thursdays:

September 20
October 18
November 8
November 29

Take-Home Exam

The take-home exam will feature 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. It is recommended that the course readings be referenced and directly quoted. Academic research outside the course material is permitted provided that it is sufficiently documented. That being said, answers that are clearly the result of a quick 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 13**. Although early submissions are encouraged, no submissions will be accepted after the deadline.

Class Presentation

Each student is expected to make a five-minute presentation on a topic of their choice that relates to premodern, modern, or contemporary Japan in some way. The goal of this presentation is to explain your topic to the class in a clear and concise manner with an emphasis on why the topic is important to our understanding of Japanese culture. These presentations will be graded according to a four-point rubric: (1) clarity, or ability to convey content, (2) impact, or ability to demonstrate why the project is interesting and important, (3) appropriate use of visual aids, and (4) ability to handle questions and comments. Plan on using a PowerPoint slideshow or some other type of visual aid, but try not to include more than 30 to 45 seconds of video. These presentations will be scheduled on Thursdays throughout the semester. No group presentations are allowed.

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 by means of a consultation with the Office of Disability Services. Class participation grade is roughly graded according to the following rubric:

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

Course Policies*Required Readings*

This class follows a set structure in which Tuesday classes will focus on content lectures while Thursday classes will revolve around discussions of primary and secondary texts. Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Although it is not necessary to bring the textbook to Tuesday classes, it is highly recommended that students bring a physical copy of the appropriate reading to each Thursday class. With the exception of the textbook and the two graphic novels, all assigned reading will be available on the course website on Blackboard.

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, printouts, and forwarded emails are fine)

within three days of your absence. **Each unexcused absence after the second will result in half a letter grade being deducted from your final course grade**, in addition to a reduction of your participation grade. Please be aware that obligations for other classes (such as exams, mandatory group work, and study sessions) do not count as valid excuses, even if they are scheduled during our class time. If such a conflict arises, please notify the professor to reschedule the commitment. Showing up to class more than fifteen minutes late will count as an absence.

Technology

Tablets are permitted in their capacity as e-readers, but **laptop computers are absolutely not allowed** without a formal letter from the Office of Disability Services. **Smartphones are not allowed for any reason**. If I see you using your smartphone in class, I will mark you down as absent for that class period and lower your participation grade accordingly.

Disability Accommodation

The Office of Disability Services has strict guidelines concerning the submission of accommodation requests. If your registered disability enables you to receive a specific accommodation on a class assignment or evaluation, please submit the appropriate paperwork to me in advance of the deadline, which is generally a week before the assignment due date or scheduled evaluation date. If you feel that I am not being properly sensitive to your disability, please let me know, and please don't hesitate to suggest a meeting with your officer at the ODS. I am strongly committed to helping you succeed.

Plagiarism

I have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. If you submit work that isn't your own for any assignment for any reason, you will fail the class, and I will report you to the Honor Committee, which may result in your expulsion from the university. Plagiarism is surprisingly easy to catch, so please don't try it.

Respect

Each student is expected to be respectful of the instructor and their peers. No speech or behavior demonstrating or encouraging discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, body shape, neurodivergence, or physical disability will be tolerated. Cultural essentialism, or the reduction of a large and diverse group of people into a set of stereotypes, is offensive and counter to the purpose of this course. The uncritical reproduction of any of these types of discourses in written or oral class assignments will be harshly penalized.

Week One: Myths of Origin

Tuesday (08/28)
Course Introduction

Thursday (08/30)
Japanese Culture, Chapter One

Week Two: Continental Culture

Tuesday (09/04)
Japanese Culture, Chapter Two

Thursday (09/06)
Sources of Japanese Tradition, Chapter 3

Week Three: A Crepuscular Golden Age

Tuesday (09/11)
Japanese Culture, Chapter Three

Thursday (09/13)
The Tale of Genji, “Yūgao: The Twilight Beauty”

Week Four: The Rise of the Samurai

Tuesday (09/18)
Japanese Culture, Chapter Four

Thursday (09/20)
The Tale of the Heike (selections)
QUIZ #1

Week Five: Buddhism and the Aesthetics of Impermanence

Tuesday (09/25)
Japanese Culture, Chapter 5

Thursday (09/27)
Japanese Nō Dramas, “Atsumori”

Week Six: Feudal Warlords and Transnational Exchange

Tuesday (10/02)
Japanese Culture, Chapter 6

Thursday (10/04)

Sources of Japanese Tradition, pp.433-40; 458-72

FALL BREAK

(10/09 and 10/11)

Week Seven: The Early Modern Period

Tuesday (10/16)

Japanese Culture, Chapter 7

Thursday (10/18)

Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (selections)

QUIZ #2

Week Eight: The Golden Twilight of the Samurai

Tuesday (10/23)

Japanese Culture, Chapter 8

Thursday (10/25)

Masterpieces of Kabuki, “Kasane”

Week Nine: Civilization and Enlightenment

Tuesday (10/30)

A Modern History of Japan, Chapter Five; Chapter Seven

Thursday (11/01)

Mori Ōgai, “The Dancing Girl”

Week Ten: Modern Girls and Modern Boys

Tuesday (11/06)

A Modern History of Japan, Chapter Ten

Thursday (11/08)

Ayako Kano, “A New Theater”

QUIZ #3

Week Eleven: The Pacific War

Tuesday (11/13)

A Modern History of Japan, Chapter Twelve

Thursday (11/15)
Masuji Ibuse, "The Crazy Iris"

Week Twelve: The Postwar and the Postmodern

Tuesday (11/20)
Anne Allison, "From Ashes to Cyborgs"

**THANKSGIVING BREAK
(11/22)**

Week Thirteen: The Girls Who Leapt Through Time

Tuesday (11/27)
Janet S. Shibamoto-Smith, "When Manners Are Not Enough: The Newspaper Advice Column and the 'Etiquette' of Cultural Ideology in Contemporary Japan"

Thursday (11/29)
Naoko Takeuchi, *Sailor Moon*, Vol. 1
QUIZ #4

Week Fourteen: Reimagining "Japan"

Tuesday (12/04)
Masashi Kishimoto, *Naruto*, Vol. 1

Thursday (12/06)
Course Conclusion

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The take-home final exam will be distributed in class on Thursday, December 6.

- 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.
- This is an open-book exam. Please consult your notes and the readings.
- Please use Chicago-style citation for direct quotations.
- If you have any questions, please contact me before noon on the due date.
- All exams must be submitted as an email attachment.
- No extensions are possible, and no late exams will be accepted.

The deadline for submission of the final exam is **4:15PM on Thursday, December 13.**