

First Year Seminar B: Issues in Contemporary Japanese Society

Registration code	0054221	Credits	2.0
Course Category	Basic GE, 1Y Seminar	Classroom	A11
Term(Semester)/Day/Period	II (1st year 2nd semester) / Thu / 2 (10:30~12:00)		
Instructor	HOPSON Nathan Edwin		
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Target Schools (Programs)	Le(J) • La(S) • Ec(S)		

● Course Aims

This course provides a thematic introduction to issues in contemporary Japanese society. It is intended as a foundation both for a deeper understanding of modern Japan and for critical thinking and writing.

● Course Prerequisites

None

● Course Content

We will examine conceptions and misconceptions about Japanese society in the postwar period. The focus is on issues in the post-bubble (contemporary) period, but in comparison with the changes in Japanese society that preceded it (roughly 1945-1990).

Schedule (*subject to change*)

- **“Japan”**
 1. Stereotyping Japan – The perils of national character
 2. The national projects of “affluence” and “identity” – “Growthism” and “*Nihonjinron*”
 3. The social formation of postwar society – Work, family, schooling
- **Work and gender**
 4. The “salaryman” – The standard by which “problems” are defined
 5. “Office Ladies” – Divided and conquered
 6. Family matters – Home is where Japan is
- **Young Japanese**
 7. The new singles – Parasites or pragmatists?
 8. The “credential society” – Educational meritocracy vs. tracks, layers, and disparities
 9. The new workers – “Freeters,” temps, and other marginals
- **Aging and death**
 10. New seniors in an aging society – “Old” or “Silver?”
 11. Death, dying, and funerals – Tradition, McDonaldization, liberation
- **Pop culture**
 12. Leisure and consumption – Takarazuka and Hello Kitty
 13. “Millennial Monsters” – “Cool Japan”
 14. Japanese hip-hop and rap – Dialectics of authenticity and resistance

In addition to reading, there will be video assignments.

All materials will be provided by the instructor. There is no need to purchase a textbook.

● **Course Evaluation Methods**

- Class participation: 25%
- Weekly reading responses: 25%
- Discussion leader (*one time*): 25%
- Final paper or project: 25%

Participation

Show up and be an engaged and positive participant in discussions.

Discussion Leader

Either individually or as a team of 2~3, all students will lead discussion once during the term. We will meet in advance and I will help you prepare to lead discussion.

Final Paper

The final paper will be a “Then and Now” comparison of an issue of interest to you from the readings. You will find *at least* one additional source to compare with the class readings and write a 5~10pg paper analyzing changes in one limited aspect of Japanese society as demonstrated by your sources. This is *not* a research paper; the requirement of an additional source is primarily to help familiarize you with the resources available through the NU library system.

Project

Alternatively, use your creativity and non-writing talents to address the same “Then/Now” question in a poster, work of art, video, song, presentation, software application, etc. You will need my preapproval, but I highly encourage you to consider this avenue.

● Notice for Students

In principle, grades will be assigned as follows:

%	Letter	# Grade
90-100	A	4.0
80-89	B	3.0
70-79	C	2.0
60-69	D	1.0
0-59	F	0

(Subject to revision)

Textbook	None
Reference Book	None