

First-Year Seminar: Contemporary Japanese Society

1. Date and Time

Wednesday, 2nd period (10:30~12:00)

2. General Description

Thematic exploration of key issues in postwar and contemporary Japan.

There are two categories of goals: content and skills. By the end of the term:

1. You will be conversant with many issues and narratives about contemporary (post-bubble) Japan, and will have a critical understanding of major themes and issues in Japan today.
2. You will be a more efficient and critical reader of primary and secondary source materials, and an improved writer, editor, and discussion leader.

In short, you will improve your reading, writing, and critical thinking skills while learning about contemporary Japanese society.

3. Course Content

This is a seminar on issues in postwar and contemporary Japan. It will provide a basic overview of key themes for understanding Japan, and a jumping off point to pursue themes of interest in future classes and research.

The course is not a lecture. You cannot slack off. You cannot “fake it.” You must complete the readings to be involved in the discussions, and must be involved in the discussions to receive a good grade.

Schedule

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2. “Japanese culture” | 8. Young Japanese II |
| 3. Postwar social formation | 9. Leisure and consumption |
| 4. Hard work | 10. Homelessness |
| 5. Gender I | 11. Seniors and death |
| 6. Gender II | 12. 3/11 |
| 7. Young Japanese I | |

Assignments

The work in this course is not limited to reading and discussion.

1. **Lead discussion** at least once, with at least one partner (depending on enrollment). Student-led discussions will begin with Week 7. You will sign up in advance. You must meet with me for about 30" prior to class (by appointment) to prepare. Guidelines provided separately.
2. Produce a **final project**. You may write a seminar paper (5-10 pages), or propose a creative project taking advantage of your unique talents and interests. Write an app, make a movie, curate an exhibit online or off, build a model, etc. Group projects are encouraged (but not coauthored papers). Proposals must be submitted prior to class Week 10. Guidelines provided separately.
3. Make a **presentation** of a "draft" version of your final project. Present your work to the class in Week 12 or 13. Specifics will vary according to student enrolment. Guidelines provided separately.
4. Write one-paragraph **weekly reading responses (précis)** online. Guidelines provided separately.

4. Textbook

None. All materials supplied online.

5. Reference Materials

To supplement your knowledge of Japanese history as needed, I recommend the library's electronic copy of:

Tsutsui, William, ed. *A Companion to Japanese History*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

6. Evaluation

Attendance and participation: 30% Reading responses (précis): 30%

Discussion leader: 10% Final paper or presentation: 30%

For reference, be aware that a “good” project gets a B. Amaze me and you get an A, disappoint me and you’re looking at a C at best. Same for the course.

“A” = exceptional. “B” = good. “C” = meh. Anything else = trouble.

7. Additional Information

Plagiarism

Plagiarism (using someone’s work without giving credit) is a serious intellectual and academic offense. When in doubt, cite.

For additional information, please reference the program policy statement:

<http://www.lit.nagoya-u.ac.jp/english/g30/JACS%20Statement%20on%20Academic%20Integrity%20%28v1.1%29.pdf>

Readings

2. "Japanese culture"

- Goodman, Roger. 2008. "Making Majority Culture." In *A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan*, 59–71. Blackwell Companions to Anthropology 5. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. 1994. "Rice as Metaphor for the Japanese Self." In *Paths toward the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina*, edited by Robert W Harms and Jan Vansina, African Studies Association, 455–72. Atlanta: African Studies Association Press.
- Robot duel = Japanese culture ([Youtube](#)) ([Evernote](#))

3. Postwar social formation

- Kelly, William W. 1986. "Rationalization and Nostalgia: Cultural Dynamics of New Middle-class Japan." *American Ethnologist* 13 (4): 603–18.
- Chiavacci, David. 2008. "From Class Struggle to General Middle-Class Society to Divided Society: Societal Models of Inequality in Postwar Japan." *Social Science Japan Journal* 11 (1): 5.

4. Hard work

- *The Japan Times Online*. 2015. "[Workaholic Japan Considers Making It Compulsory to Take Vacation Days](#)," February 4.
- Katō, Tetsurō. 1995. "[Workaholism: It's Not in the Blood.](#)" *Look Japan*, February, 8–10.
- Chira, Susan. 1988. "It's Official! Vacations Really Aren't Un-Japanese." *The New York Times*, August 6, sec. Section 1; Page 4, Column 1; Foreign Desk. ([Evernote](#))
- Yamazaki, Jun. 2015. "[What Work-Life Balance?: Japan's Full-Timers Put in Most Overtime on Record in 2014.](#)" *Nikkei Asian Review*. March 31.

5. Gender I

- Hastings, Sally A. 2007. "Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan." In *A Companion to Japanese History*, edited by William Tsutsui, 372–88.
- Holloway, Susan D. *Women and family in contemporary Japan*. Cambridge University Press. 2010. 3-10.
- Ogasawara, Yuko. 2008. "The Japanese Paradox: Women's Voices of Fulfillment in the Face of Inequalities." Edited by Fiona Devine and Mary C. Waters. *Social Inequalities in Comparative Perspective*, 237–56.

6. Gender II

- Dasgupta, Romit. 2009. "[The 'lost Decade' of the 1990s and Shifting Masculinities in Japan.](#)" *Culture, Society & Masculinities* 1 (1): 79–95.
- ----- . 2010. "[Globalisation and the Bodily Performance of 'Cool' and 'Un-Cool' Masculinities in Corporate Japan.](#)" *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 23 (January).
- Wilson, Peter. 1988. "A Day in the Life of a Tokyo 'Salaryman.'" *The Advertiser*, July 15. ([Evernote](#))
- Week in the life of a Tokyo salaryman ([Youtube](#))
- Effects of Gender Norms on Male Freeters ([Youtube](#))

7. Young Japanese

- Allison, Anne. 2013. *Precarious Japan*. Duke University Press. 21-42.
- Honda, Yuki. 2005. "['Freeters': Young Atypical Workers in Japan.](#)" *Japan Labour Review* 2 (3): 5–25.

8. Leisure and consumption I

- Convenience stores ([Nipponia website](#))
 - Read any two of the eight articles in the Special Feature
- Creighton, Millie R. 1991. "[Maintaining Cultural Boundaries in Retailing: How Japanese Department Stores Domesticate 'Things Foreign.'](#)" *Modern Asian Studies* 25 (4): 675–709.

- Sand, Jordan. 2006. "The Ambivalence of the New Breed: Nostalgic Consumerism in 1980s and 1990s Japan." In *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West*, edited by Sheldon Garon and Patricia L. Maclachlan, 185–198. Cornell University Press.

9. Leisure and consumption II

- Thorn, Matthew. 2004. "Girls and Women Getting Out of Hand: The Pleasure and Politics of Japan's Amateur Comics Community." In *Fanning the Flames: Fans and Consumer Culture in Contemporary Japan*, edited by William W. Kelly, 169–88. SUNY Press.
- Kinsella, Sharon. 1995. "Cuties in Japan." In *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*, edited by Brian Moeran and Lise Skov, 220–54. Routledge.
- Miller, Laura. 2012. "Youth Fashion and Changing Beautification Practices." In *Japan's Changing Generations: Are Young People Creating a New Society?*, edited by Gordon Mathews and Bruce White, 83–97. Routledge.

10. Homelessness and Labor Instability

- Onishi, Norimitsu. 2008. "[A Leftover City of Day Laborers in Japan Faces Grim Future](#)." *New York Times*, October 12.
- Aoki, Hideo. 2003. "[Homelessness in Osaka: Globalisation, Yoseba and Disemployment](#)." *Urban Studies* 40 (2): 361–78.
- TBA

11. Seniors, death, and dying

- Shinya, Yamada. 2004. "[Funerals Rites and Changing Perceptions of Death in Contemporary Japan](#)." *Mortality* 9 (1): 27–41.
 - Skim: [Trends in the Japanese Funeral Industry](#) (JETRO 2006)
- Traphagan, John W. 2013. "[Japan's Demographic Disaster](#)." *The Diplomat*. February 3.

12. Post-3/11

- TBA