

Okayama University

2021 Spring: Introduction to Japanology

Institute of Global Human Resource Development

E-Learning: Eight (8) modules; One (1) Undergraduate Credit

Instructor

KAMBARA, Nobuyuki, Ph.D., Professor

SDGs Goal(s)



Contact:

E-mail: kambara@okayama-u.ac.jp, Tel. 81-(0)86-251-7476, Office: #225, Faculty of Letters, Law, and Economics Building No.2

Office Hour

Wednesday 14:00 - 16:00, or by appointment

Medium Language of Instruction

English

Outline of the Course

This course is open to students from Okayama University and students from prominent partner institutions.

This course offers an introductory survey of the diversity of Japanese society from a sociological perspective. Several aspects of contemporary Japanese history will be covered, drawing on knowledge from research in Japanese history, education, and literature, as well as from the various social sciences. The course revolves around three broad issues that provide an underlying thematic coherence and that demonstrate how sociologists approach a society of such complexity and depth:

A) What makes Japan a recognizable cultural and social entity? What cultural idioms and social institutions are distinctive, salient features of Japan? How can we talk about the "distinctiveness" of Japan without falling into the common trap of attributing a "uniqueness" to Japan?

B) What has been the course of social and cultural change in modern Japan? How are Japan's present patterns continuous or discontinuous with its past? What are the cultural politics of tradition?

C) Japanese society is undergoing profound change as new social actors appear among the generations. What new social formation is replacing patterns of life that characterized Japan in the late twentieth century?

This intensive course is designed to offer an opportunity for both students from Okayama University's partner institutions and Okayama University to virtually study together and to have discussions on topics of the course contents.

Under the instructor's supervision, students are expected to form multinational teams to carry out group research and make presentations at the last meeting.

Objectives

To understand social institutions and social issues within contemporary Japanese society. To analyze and discuss the Japanese social agenda put forth in newspapers and mass media. To discuss and collaborate with students from other countries.

Targeted Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

To understand the culture, society, and people of Japan.

To explain the culture and society of Japan based on students' learning.

In the final session, students will present group research projects (in groups of mixed nationality) on topics approved by the instructor. In addition to demonstrating the ability to formulate a good researchable topic or question, gather relevant material, and present a clear and logical argument examining ideas and evidence, students should also demonstrate a good understanding of issues covered in the weekly discussions.

Additional short essays may be required during the semester.

Schedule

1. February 16 (Tuesday), 2021, Zoom meeting (17:00 - 19:00 JST)

Orientation: Planning Your Study of Japan

- (a) Students' self-introduction presentations (Each student has 3 minutes)
- (b) Read the article: "Communication and Culture: The Voice and Echo" In Introduction to Intercultural Communication." In Samovar, L.A., Porter, R. E. & McDaniel E.R. (Eds.), 2007, Communication Between Cultures. United States: Wadsworth.
- (c) Assignment #1: Discussion in Moodle

2. February 22 (Tuesday), 2021 (Asynchronous)

Characteristics of Japanese Culture Put Forth in the Genre Known as Nihonjin Ron

- (a) Read the article: Harumi Befu. 2001. "Premises, Models, and Ideologies." In "Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjin Ron" (Pp. 66-85). Melbourne, Australia: Trans Pacific.
- (b) Assignment #1: Discussion in Moodle

3. February 26 (Friday), 2021 (Asynchronous)

Issues on Social Class and Education in Japan.

- (a) Read the article: Kariya, Takehiko. 2010. "From Credential Society to "Learning Capital" Society: a Rearticulation of Class Formation in Japanese Education and Society." In Ishida, Hiroshi and David H. Slater (Eds.) *Social Class in Contemporary Japan: Structures, Sorting and Strategies* (pp.87-113). New York: Routledge.
- (b) Assignment #2: Discussion in Moodle

4. March 4 (Thursday), 2021 (Asynchronous)

Issues on Employment in Japan

- (a) Read the Article: Kingston, Jeff. 2013. "Jobs at Risk." In Kingston, Jeff (Ed.) *Contemporary Japan: History, Politics, and Social Change since the 1980s* (Pp.77-92). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons
- (b) Assignment #3: Discussion in Moodle

5. March 10 (Wednesday), 2021 (Asynchronous)

Gender Issues

- (a) Read the article: North, Scott. 2009. "Negotiating What's 'Natural': Persistent Domestic Gender Role Inequality in Japan." *Social Science Japan Journal* 12 (1): Pp. 23-44.
- (b) Assignment #4: Discussion in Moodle

6. March 16 (Tuesday), 2021 (Asynchronous)

Minority Issues in Japan

- (a) Read the article: Cleveland, Kyle. 2014. "Hiding in Plain Sight: Minority Issues in Japan." In Kingston, Jeff (Ed.) *Critical Issues in Contemporary Japan*. Routledge.
- (b) Assignment #5: Discussion in Moodle

7. March 22 (Monday), 2021 (Asynchronous)

Pop-Culture Diplomacy

- (a) Read the article: Iwabuchi, Koichi. 2015. "Pop-culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of 'International Cultural Exchange'." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2015 Vol. 21, No. 4, Pp.419–432.
- (b) Assignment #5: Discussion in Moodle

8. March 29 (Monday), 2021. Zoom meeting (17:00 – 19:00 JST)

Students' Presentations
Wrap-up

How to Learn this Course

First of all, this is an online course that will be conducted using Moodle, the Okayama University learning management system. All students from overseas partner institutions will be provided their own individual ID and password to log in.

<https://moodle.el.okayama-u.ac.jp/>

You are expected to read all of the required articles and to actively participate in the discussion forums in Moodle.

During the first meeting, students will be divided into four mixed-nationality groups to prepare their final group presentations. Students are expected to collaborate on this presentation together. For preparation, students should communicate together through e-mail, social networking, or other means to maintain communication with other students.

Note 1: This course is a special intensive course. Although major lessons will be asynchronous, students must follow and keep current with the course schedule.

Note 2: There will be two synchronous (live) Zoom meetings. The indicated time of meetings will be based on Japan Standard Time (JST). Zoom meeting information will be provided in Moodle. All registered students must check the course and zoom meeting information at least the day before the first class meeting.

Note 3: This course is intended for four (4) Japanese, four (4) Chinese, and four (4) Korean students, in order to offer a meaningful learning experience for a blended student body. Additional students from other countries may be welcome if space is available.

Please contact the instructor immediately in case of trouble accessing Moodle or class materials.

Grading Policy

Discussion: The instructor will explicitly specify how many minimum posts each student is required to make for each discussion module in Moodle. Extra posts (beyond the minimum number of posts) will be counted as extra points toward the final grade. The instructor will provide a rubric assessment guideline concerning the quality of posts.

Final Group Presentation: The presentation topic must be agreed upon by the instructor by March 4. The instructor will provide a rubric assessment guideline concerning the quality of presentations.

Peer Evaluation: At the end of this intensive course, students must evaluate each other and how much each contributed to the group work. The instructor will provide a rubric assessment guideline.

Total Grade = Discussion (50%) + Final Group Presentation (30%) + Peer Evaluation (20%)

■ Prerequisites

In order to register for this course, students must pledge not to drop out during the middle of the course without a justifiable reason and that they have sufficient English proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking for the course assignments. A minimum score of TOEFL 500 (PBT), TOEFL 61 (iBT), or equivalent, is a must.