

## **JAS150 INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE SOCIETY (3 credit hours)**

Instructor: Darren ASHMORE, PhD

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Semesters: Spring

Meeting times: TBC

### **DESCRIPTION:**

In the first part this course introduces some basic Japanese socio-cultural concepts such as *tatemaehone*, *giri*, *wabi/sabi*, *ryosai kenbo*, and so forth in order to become familiar with some general constructs, influencing the inherent logic of Japanese society.

In the second part, the course introduces Japanese society from a cultural-anthropological perspective with an attempt to present a variety of views on Japan.

The emphasis is placed on multi-cultural facets rather than homogeneity of Japanese society. The following topics are covered: sources of Japanese tradition, house/family system, community and neighborhood, social status and stratification, gender, religion, education and career, life cycle and festivals, entertainment, etc.

**OBJECTIVES:** This course is designed to help students dispel some of the long standing preconceptions about the Japanese which have developed over the years, and which sometimes stubbornly refuse to die despite their obviously unfounded nature. The students will come to grips with facets of contemporary Japanese society and will be able to compare them to their own situations – be they based on an internal or external view of the country.

### **STUDY MATERIALS:**

#### **<Core Textbook>**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge University Press. 2003.

#### **<Reference books, sources of readings and other information>**

- Hendry, Joy. *Understanding Japanese Society*. London: Routledge. 2003.
- Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture*. Tuttle. 2002.
- McCargo, Duncan. *Contemporary Japan*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.

- Benedict, Ruth. The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture. Mariner Books. (Reprint) 2006.
- Martinez, Dolores. Et al. The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures. Cambridge University Press. 1998.
- Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
- Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.
- Denoon, Donald. Et al. Multicultural Japan. Cambridge University Press. 2006.

**ASSESSMENT:** Student achievement of the stated course Objectives will be measured in terms of student performance in the following three areas: (1) Essay (40%), (2) Final Essay/Case Study (40%), and (3) Class participation (20%).

**ACADEMIC PREPARATION:** This is an introductory course to Japanese performing arts, with no requirements other than an interest in the stage and Japanese cultural history.

**POLICIES:** All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for this course. Acts of plagiarism or other forms academic dishonesty will be dealt with harshly. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism> for more information.

**COURSE FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES:** Weekly sessions will be divided into lecture and group seminar sessions. During lectures the key points of the course will be presented and discussed and study groups will select an issue to debate in the following seminar. There will also be a number of screenings during the course.

#### **SCHEDULE:**

<April>

<Week 1>

**Theme:** *Uchi and Soto: Mythconceptions of Japan*.

**Lecture:** Examining different the social concepts (such as *tatemaie*, *giri*, *uchi*, etc.), both from the point of view of the Japanese and from the perspective of the world.

**Seminar Question:** What do current views on such notions as *tatemaie* say about modern Japan.?

#### **Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003.

**and**

- Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture. Tuttle. 2002.
- McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
- Martinez, Dolores. Et al. The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures. Cambridge University Press. 1998.
- Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.

<Week 2>

**Theme:** *Studying Japan*.

**Lecture:** Examining foreign perspectives on Japan in both the historical context and in the modern age – both in positive and negative ways.

**Seminar Question:** What do European and American views on Japan during and after the Second World War say about the social and political insecurities in the West?

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter 1)

**and**

- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
- Benedict, Ruth. The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture. Mariner Books. (Reprint) 2006.
- Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
- Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.

<Week 3>

**Theme:** *Class and Stratification*.

**Lecture:** Exploding the myth that Japan has no clear cut class divisions, but is rather defined by a of a group-against-group mentality (drawn from certain readings of *tatema* perhaps). This week's lecture details different perspectives on the social structure of contemporary Japan.

**Seminar Question:** How do the Japanese themselves conceptualise the notion of class division?

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter2)

**and**

- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
- Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture. Tuttle. 2002.
- McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
- Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.

<May>

<Week 4>

**Theme:** *Geography and Aging.*

**Lecture:** This week's lecture examines the rapidly shrinking Japanese population and the ways in which the pressures of an aging population put on areas such as Akita Prefecture.

**Seminar Question:** Why has large scale immigration been roundly rejected as a possible solution to Japan's declining population crisis?

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter
- and**
- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
  - McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
  - Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
  - Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.
  - Denoon, Donald. Et al. Multicultural Japan. Cambridge University Press. 2006.

<Week 5>

**Theme:** *Work and Labour.*

**Lecture:** This week's lecture looks at popular *soto* mythconceptions of Japanese *zaibatsu*-esque corporations dominating work and consumer life and exposes a more complex picture of small company involvement.

**Seminar Question:** the so called '*New Freeta*' were once seen as the enemy of the Japanese work ethic. How and why have companies – both large and small – taken this expanding group to heart in the last 5 years?

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter 4)

**and**

- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
- Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture. Tuttle. 2002.
- McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
- Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
- Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.

<Week 6>

**Theme:** *Education.*

**Lecture:** This week's lecture deals with an educational system which is still misunderstood by many foreign sources as being little more than a regimented factory for corporate drones. We will be examining the complex social web of interaction which exists in the Japanese school and explore how the demands of a rapidly changing nation are being met – or not – by its education system.

**Seminar Question:** 'Strict school, slack university'. Why do these mythconceptions of Japanese education still persist?

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter 5)

**and**

- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
- Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture. Tuttle. 2002.
- McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
- Martinez, Dolores. Et al. The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures. Cambridge University Press. 1998.
- Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.

<Week 7>

**Theme:** *Family Breakdowns.*

**Lecture:** Seen as the heart of all Japanese social order, the family unit is the subject of this week's lecture. Specifically we will be dealing with issues of (non)marriage and reproduction, as well as the aging state of the families.

**Seminar Question:** "A patriarchy which would collapse without female support". Examine the role of women in a modern Japanese working family.

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter 6)
- and**
- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
  - Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture. Tuttle. 2002.
  - Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
  - Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.

<June>

<Week 8>

**Theme:** *Minorities and Immigrants*.

**Lecture:** This week's lecture deals with the Japanese view of both native ethnic groups and immigrant communities. It will detail both the negative and positive ways in which such groups are negotiated with by the, so called, ethnic Japanese and look at the, often artificial, nature of the divisions thrown up against such people by those who seek to preserve something of Japan's own imaginary pristine national identity.

**Seminar Question:** Why are so many Japanese afraid of being associated with a *soto* heritage in the modern world? .

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter 7)
- and**
- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
  - Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture. Tuttle. 2002.
  - McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
  - Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
  - Denoon, Donald. Et al. Multicultural Japan. Cambridge University Press. 2006.

<Week 9>

**Theme:** *Insider Dealing.*

**Lecture:** It is often said that most serious crime in Japan is to be found in the government. This lecture explores this myth and examines the grains of truth which gave light to it – examining the structure of the post-war government and the moneyed interests which still essentially control Japanese politics (much as anywhere else in the world).

**Seminar Question:** Why did the LDP, which had successfully controlled Japanese politics for over thirty years, fail so dramatically in 1993?

**Readings:**

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter 8)
- and**
- Davies, Roger., and Ikeno, Osamu. The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture. Tuttle. 2002.
  - McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
  - Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
  - Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.

<Week 10>

**Theme:** *Faith.*

**Lecture:** Examining the state of organized Japanese religion and changing state of belief in the nation. We will look particularly at the rise of cult religions, secularism/humanism and the way in which the Japanese government deals with foreign faiths.

**Seminar Question:** Where have all the faithful gone? Have Japan's traditional religions become little more than cultural remnants?

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003. (chapter
- and**
- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
  - McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
  - Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.

- Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.
- Denoon, Donald. Et al. Multicultural Japan. Cambridge University Press. 2006.

<Week 11>

**Theme:** *Super Dollfies vs. Bunraku: Popular and Elite Culture Clashes.*

**Lecture:** Examining the nature of Japanese popular and youth movements in the modern age – from Gothic Lolita/Nazism fetishes, through the Americana movements to the Super Dollfie passions – and the ways in which they conflict with more traditional pastimes.

**Seminar Question:** Inclusive or exclusive: Are Japanese popular cult movements concerned with creating groups, or excluding individuals?

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press. 2003.  
(chapter  
**and**
- Hendry, Joy. Understanding Japanese Society. London: Routledge. 2003.
- McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. Palgrave Macmillan. 2004.
- Waswo, Ann. Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994. Oxford University Press. 1996.
- Reischauer, Edwin. The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition. Belknap Press/ (Reprint) 2004.
- Denoon, Donald. Et al. Multicultural Japan. Cambridge University Press. 2006.

<July>

<Week 12>

**Theme:** *Screening Culture: Japanese Film and Television.*

**Lecture:** This week's lecture examines Japanese film and television media, looking at the ways in which the aesthetics of Japanese creators have found acceptance in many markets overseas – from the very traditional dramas such as 'Abarenbou Shogun', through the aesthetics of Japanese social cinema, to Oscar winning animation from Hayao Miyazaki.

**Seminar Question:** Why is *anime* so immensely popular outside Japan?

<Week 13>

**Theme:** Screening.

**Readings:** NA

<Week 14>

**Theme:** *Course Review and Examination Preparation.*

**Lecture:** Both the lecture and seminar for this week will be devoted to reviewing the course and will provide students with an opportunity to discuss any issues that they might have before the final examination.

**Readings:** NA