

JAS 360: Sociological Analysis of *Nihonjinron*
Spring 2010
MW 15:30-16:45
Room TBA

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Course description

The topic of this course is a comparison of the *nihonjinron* (theories about the uniqueness of Japanese and Japanese culture) and Western sociological theory. Such a comparison is from a sociological point of view interesting, because the *nihonjinron* is the *only* complex of social theories which was developed in a non-Western context. Key concepts of the *nihonjinron* are taken from the Japanese language completely independent of the 'universal' scientific concepts that have their roots in the Western European tradition. By comparing these theories we are not only challenging our ideas and stereotypes of Japanese culture but also the Western belief that we can explain everything with our ethnocentric Western theories.

The major concepts and theories of the *nihonjinron* will be introduced and compared with Western sociological theories which discussed similar topics. We will for example talk about the *ie*-society (family-based society), *uchi-soto* dichotomy (inside vs. outside), and the *amae*-concept (happiness in dependent relationships). We will furthermore analyze the historical development of the *nihonjinron* in the last 100 years.

(PS: This is not a Japan-bashing course. We will discuss the theories of the *nihonjinron* seriously. To accuse a complex of theories as ideological is not a scientific method, since the critic cannot prove that his or her own judgment is not itself ideological!)

Course objectives

1. To gain familiarity with the major theories of the *nihonjinron* and the major sociological theories.
2. To develop your ability to move between theories to compare, contrast and critically analyze them.
3. To gain a better understanding of how culture influenced the development of different theoretical traditions.
4. To challenge your taken-for-granted ideas about the world.
5. To practice and strengthen your ability to write about social theory in clear and concise prose.

Texts (Reader)

- 青木保 (1990): 「日本文化論」の変容. Tokyo: 中央公論社.

Or alternatively, if you can read German: Aoki, Tamotsu (1996): *Der Japandiskurs im historischen Wandel. Zur Kultur und Identität einer Nation*. München: Iudicium.

- **Befu, Harumi (1989):** A Theory of Social Exchange as Applied to Japan, in: Yoshio Sugimoto und Ross Mouer (Eds.), *Constructs for Understanding Japan*. London/New York: Kegan Paul.
 - **Davies, Roger J./Ikeno, Osamu (2002):** *The Japanese Mind. Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture*. Tokyo: Tuttle.
 - **Kreiner, Josef/Ölschleger, Dieter (1996):** *Japanese Culture and Society. Models of Interpretation*. München: Iudicium.
 - **Mouer, Ross/Sugimoto, Yoshio (1986):** *Images of Japanese Society. A Study in the Social Construction of Reality*. London/New York: Routledge.
 - **Nakane, Chie (1970):** *Japanese Society*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
 - **Nitobe, Inazo (1969):** *Bushido. The Soul of Japan*. Boston: Tuttle.
 - **佐藤嘉一 (2003):** 「恩」の構造 — 契約における非契約的要素の問題 —. *Ritsumeikan Social Science Review* 39: 17-32.
- Or alternatively, if you can read German: **Sato, Yoshikazu (2003):** Eine phänomenologische Untersuchung des Ong (Dankbarkeit), in: Ilja Srubar and Steven Vaitkus (Eds.), *Phänomenologie und soziale Wirklichkeit. Entwicklungen und Arbeitsweisen*. Opladen: Leske & Budrich.
- **山崎正和 (1987):** 柔らかい個人主義の誕生 — 消費社会の美学. Tokyo: 中央公論社.
- Or alternatively, if you can read German: **Yamazaki, Masakazu (2002):** *Die Entstehung des sanften Individualismus. Zur Ästhetik der Konsumgesellschaft*. München: Iudicium.
- **Yoshino, Kosaku (1992):** *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan. A Sociological Inquiry*. London/New York: Routledge.

Assessment

Participation in discussion will count 30% of the overall course grade; if students make a sincere and visible effort to contribute comments that reflect thoughtful engagement with course material, they will earn full credit for participation. It is your responsibility to your classmates to read the assigned material before the class, so that you are ready to discuss it. (Students are expected to attend at least two thirds of the classes.)

Students have to make a short presentation (5 minutes). It will be worth 30% of the overall course grade.

Finally, students have to write a short (4-10 pages) academic paper. The paper should be about a comparison and evaluation of discussed pair of theories. The paper will be worth 40% of the overall course grade.

Schedule

April 12: Introduction: *Nihonjinron* and Sociological Theory

Reading: Aoki 1990, Chapter 1.

April 14, 19: Pre-*Nihonjinron* (-1944): *Bushidō* (NITOBE Inazo)

Reading: Nitobe 1908, Chapter 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, 15, and 16.

April 21, 26: *Fūdo* (WATSUJI Tetsurō)

Reading: Berque in Kreiner/Ölschleger 1996.

April 28, May 7: *Nihonjinron: First Phase (1945-1954), Second Phase (1955-1963), and Third Phase (1964-1976, 1977-1983)*

Reading: Aoki 1990, Chapter 2, 3, 4, and 5.

May 10, 12: *Vertical Organization* (NAKANE Chie)

Reading: Nakane 1970, Chapter 2.2 and 3.

May 17, 19: *Amae* (DOI Takeo)

Reading: Johnson in Kreiner/Ölschleger 1996.

May 24, 26: *Ie-Society* (MURAKAMI Yasusuke)

Reading: Kuwayama in Kreiner/Ölschleger 1996.

May 31, June 2: *Contextualism* (HAMAGUCHI Eshun)

Reading: Hamaguchi in Kreiner/Ölschleger 1996.

June 7, 9: *Honne to tatemaie; uchi to soto; on* (SATŌ Yoshikazu); *shūdan ishiki*

Reading: Davies/Ikeno 2002, pp. 115-118, 195-199, 217-222; Satō 2003.

June 14: *Nihonjinron: Fourth Phase (1984-)*

Reading: Aoki 1990, Chapter 6.

June 16, 21: *Explanation of the Nihonjinron*

Reading: Yoshino 1992, Chapter 9 and 10.

June 23, 28: *Criticism*

Reading: Mouer/Sugimoto 1986, Chapter 5.

June 30, July 5: *Soft Individualism* (YAMAZAKI Masakazu)

Reading: Yamazaki 2002, Chapter 5, 6, and 8.

July 7, 12: *Zōtō: The Japanese Custom of Gift Giving* (Harumi BEFU)

Reading: Befu 1989.

July 14, 21: *Conflict Model* (Yoshio SUGIMOTO)

Reading: Sugimoto in Kreiner/Ölschleger 1996.

Final paper due July 26