

ANTH301 - Japanese Society - Spring 2022-23

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Course introduction and goals: Japan is often framed from the outside as a place of colliding contradictions, where the “traditional” mingles with hyper-modernity, or austere spiritual practices comfortably coexist with technological innovation and pop culture exuberance. This course is a survey of Japan from an anthropological perspective that embraces and explores these ideas of contradictions. Broadly, we structure our course around a consideration of what are the conditions (sociocultural, political, economic, intellectual) by which Japan has been presented as an object of study. I want us to pay particular attention to how this construction has shaped the questions that get asked and the answers given, as well as how the anthropological study of Japan has impacted larger intellectual fields.



Student expectations, grading, and attendance: Students are expected to attend every class session except in extraordinary situations. All rules of conduct for RHIT students are followed closely, notably *plagiarism* is not tolerated and anyone caught engaging in this practice will be punished to the fullest extent of the rule. Attendance is not taken in this course. We’re a small group and it will be easily evident if you are absent. My expectation is that you come and actively participate in each class session.

Short research papers - three short papers (3-4 pages in length) that expand *through your own research* on a theme or issue we discuss in class. Papers *must* 1) incorporate new sources, 2) be argumentative in focus, 3) have a clear thesis, and 4) follow proper citation guidelines.

Quizzes - five short quizzes drawn from the readings, films, and class lectures. Quizzes are designed to bolster in-class discussions by ensuring a high overall level of

comprehension and engagement with the course material.



Exam #1 - online essay exam that asks you to connect various strands of course material and formulate a coherent argumentative position.

Short film papers - we will watch several films during the quarter outside of class. You must pick **two** of these films and write a short (2 page)

essay linking the film to other aspects of the class, highlighting the culturally significant connections the film is trying to make.

Discussion leader - we have several discussions during the quarter, usually on Fridays. Each of you will take a turn being the discussion leader. When it is your turn you will formulate a plan and then maintained a focused discussion of the relevant material during class.

Exam #2 - again, an essay exam covering material from after the first exam.

Breakdown of grades:

Quizzes (5 x 10 points) =	50 points	Discussion leader =	10 points
Exam #1 =	30 points	Short research papers (3x20) =	60 points
Short film papers (2x10) =	20 points	Exam #2 =	30 points

Total: 200 possible points

Grade	Points	Grade	Points
A	200-185	C	130-149
B+	184-180	D+	120-129
B	179-160	D	100-119
C+	150-159	F	below 99

Required texts:

1. Joy Hendry, *Understanding Japanese Society*, fifth edition (2019)
2. Suma Ikeuchi, *Jesus Loves Japan: Return Migration and Global Pentecostalism in a Brazilian Diaspora* (2019) - <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.rose-hulman.edu/lib/rosehulman-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5750354>
3. Allison Alexy's *Intimate Disconnections: Divorce and the Romance of Independence in Contemporary Japan* (2020) - <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.rose-hulman.edu/lib/rosehulman-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6265561>

*Both the Alexy and Ikeuchi books are available as a **free** ebook through the library if that is your preferred method of reading*

4. Articles as assigned and circulated

Week one: Organizing Japan (March 6, 7, 9, and 10)

M. Overview of syllabus and course introduction

T. Japan - the basics - **for Friday** - find and bring/upload a recent (last 12 months) news article on contemporary Japan

TH. Japanese history - the basics

F. Reading discussion - moderators #1

Readings: 1) Newspaper articles on Moodle - *for each article consider “what American assumptions of Japan are being relied on?”* 2) Hendry Introduction and ch. 1 and 2, 3) Alexy Introduction

Viewing Assignments: Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Shoplifters* (2018)

Week two: Emergence of family to school (March 13, 14, 16, and 17)

M. WWII, American Occupation and the shaping of Japan/US relations - paper #1 discussion

T. Is Japan still important?

TH. The Japanese family

F. Reading discussion - moderators #2/ **quiz #1**

Readings: 1) Hendry ch. 3, 4, 5, and 8, 2) Alexy ch. 1 and 2

Viewing Assignment: Hirokazu Kore-eda's *After the Storm* (2017)

Week three: School to Work (March 20, 21, 23, and 24)

M. Aging Japan and elderly care - *A Japanese Funeral* - **paper #1 due**

T. Exams and bullies - getting schooled in

TH. Working hard or hardly working?

F. Hyphenated identities - Koreans, Brazilians, and Peruvians

Readings: 1) Hendry ch. 9 and 10, 2) Ikeuchi *Prologue* and *Part I* 3) Tetsuro Kato's *Workaholism: It's Not in the Blood*

Week four: Spirits and politics (March 27, 28, 30, and 31)

M. Japan Structures of organization

T. Corruption and status quo

TH. A benign dictatorship? - locating "Japanese Culture" in politics

F. Reading discussion - moderators #3 / **quiz #2**

Readings: 1) Hendry ch. 7, 11, and 12, 2) Alexy ch. 3 and 4

Viewing Assignment: Yōjirō Takita's *Departures* (2008)

Week five: Gender (April 3, 4, 6, and 7)

M. Gender and power in Japan - paper #2 discussion

T. *Takarazuka* - playing one's role

TH. Gender, uniforms, and the structuring of daily life

F. Reading discussion - moderators #4 / **quiz #3**

Readings: 1) Alexy ch. 5, 6, and Conclusion 2) Ikeuchi *Part II and III*

Viewing Assignment: *The Great Happiness Space: Tales of an Ōsaka Love Thief* (2006)

Spring Break

Week six: Exam #1 and religion (April 17, 18, 20 and 21)

M. **Exam #1** (online)

T. Complete Exam #1 - no in-class meeting

TH. Shintoism, Buddhism, Christianity, and religious plurality

F. Reading discussion - moderators #5

Readings: 1) Hendry ch. 7, 2) Susumu's *Japan's Religious Ambivalence*

Week seven: Popular culture (April 24, 25, 27, and 28)

M. Why popular culture matters - **paper #2 due**

T. Popular culture - *anime* and *manga*

TH. *Otaku* and *Pokemon*

F. Reading discussion - moderators #6

Readings: 1) Iwabuchi's *How Japanese is Pokemon?*, 2) Galbraith's *Maid Cafés: The Affect of Fictional Characters in Akihabara, Japan*

Viewing Assignment: Makoto Shinkai's *Your Name* (2016)

Week eight: Disaster and recovery (May 1, 2, 4, and 5)

M. Risk, fear, and natural disaster in Japan - paper #3 discussion

T. 3/11 - tragedy

TH. 3/11 - recovery

F. Reading discussion - moderators #7/**quiz #4**

Readings: 1) *Fukushima Five Years After Nuclear Disaster* - note! There are multiple articles linked here, read all of them, 2) Ikeuchi *Part IV*

Viewing Assignment: *Godzilla* (1954)

Week nine: Contemporary concerns May 8, 9, 11, and 12

M. Yakuza and the right wing - **paper #3 due**

T. Whales and dolphins - eating, food and identity

TH. *Konbini*

F. Reading discussion - moderators #8/**quiz #5**

Readings: 1) McNeill's *Taiji: Japan's Dolphin Cull and the Clash of Cultures* <http://www.japanfocus.org/-David-McNeill/2306/article.html>, 2) Takeda's *Delicious Food in a Beautiful Country: Nationhood and Nationalism in Discourses on Food in Contemporary Japan*, 3) Ikeuchi *Part V*

Viewing Assignments: Hideaki Anno's *Shin Gōjira* (2016)

Week ten: Contemporary concerns (May 15, 16, 18, and 19)

M. Domestic terror, new religions, and national security

T. Precarious Japan

TH. **Exam #2** (*online*)

F. Complete and submit Exam #2 - no in-class meeting

Readings: 1) Hendry Conclusion

