

HIS 272 H, CULTURAL INTERACTIONS: JAPAN

Spring Semester 2011

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SYLLABUS

The origins and development of traditional Japanese culture and civilization owe a great deal to cultural interactions taking place between Japan and China. Later the acceleration of the modernization process beginning in the mid-eighteenth century reflected the impact of interactions occurring between Japan and the nations of the West. More recently we have all witnessed the expanding influence of Japanese popular culture around the world as a contemporary example of cultural interaction at work. Our course of study over the coming semester will allow us the opportunity to explore each of these instances of "cultural interaction" as we examine the historical impact of such intercultural contacts on the specific Asian and Western cultures involved.

This course of study has been designed to provide students an opportunity to explore ways in which external influences are incorporated into an existing cultural matrix and in turn come to exert an impact on other cultures. Issues we will explore include considerations of acceptance versus rejection, adoption versus adaptation, imposition versus acquisition, accidental versus purposeful absorption and the nature and effect of the emergent cultural mix, both internally and externally.

The course will first discuss basic elements constituting the core of the Japanese cultural experience, then focus on influences exerted on Japan by China and Korea beginning in the fifth century and from Europe and the United States after the mid-nineteenth century; the concluding portion of the course will examine influences exerted by Japan on both Asia and the West, particularly by elements of contemporary Japanese popular culture.

Assigned materials for the course include a series of web-based illustrated lectures on Japanese cultural history, a DVD documentary on late traditional Japan, the autobiography of an internationally famed late nineteenth century Japanese "geisha", a monograph on the concept of "soft power" and two introductory history texts.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: by the conclusion of the course of study, students enrolled in CULTURAL INTERACTIONS should be able to –

1. Describe basic defining characteristics (social, religious, philosophical and aesthetic) of Japanese civilization and culture, both traditional and modern
2. Delineate ways in which these defining characteristics have been affected by specific elements of other cultures imported to Japan from both East Asia and the West
3. Explicate examples of Japanese cultural influences on Asian and Western cultures.
4. At the conclusion of the course, apply insights gained from these investigations to a discussion of ways in which external cultural influences are incorporated into American culture on the one hand and ways in which aspects of the American cultural experience exert an influence outside the United States on the other

EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS: Students will be expected to complete three analytical investigations –

1. the first exploring a specific aspect of traditional Japanese culture, illustrating the adaptive incorporation of a specific Chinese or Korean influence into traditional Japanese life and culture;
2. a second dissecting an instance of cultural assimilation involving an aspect of modern Western culture; and ...
3. finally a third analysis dealing with the impact of an aspect of Japanese culture in a non-Japanese setting.

Students will also be required to participate in a series of individual oral presentations and panel discussions and to maintain an ongoing series of journal entries in which they discuss personal reactions to reading assignments, class discussions and research investigations

ACADEMIC SKILL DEVELOPMENT EXPECTATIONS: in the course of the semester, students should develop enhanced abilities to –

1. conduct independent research on assigned topics, locating, evaluating and utilizing a variety of materials from a variety of sources;
2. interpret and analyze research findings in light of established thematic constructs;
3. read a variety of source material, including a specifically assigned scholarly monograph, with insight and understanding, evaluating both the validity of the author's thesis and the use of supporting evidence marshaled in its defense;
4. make effective oral presentations individually, as a panel participant and in group discussion on research findings as related to established course themes;
5. express (and justify) in both formal and informal written work one's individual analytical and interpretive insights discussing cultural interactions involving Japan investigated as required in course assignments.

The course meets the University General Education Degree Requirements as a WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM course and as an ARTS AND HUMANITIES course focused on "a society other than the US" incorporating Asian content and addressing WRITING, ORAL COMMUNICATION and CRITICAL THINKING skills.

ASSIGNMENTS: A long term multiple part series of journal assignments, a graded classroom discussion, one short analytical essay, an analytical book review, one or two oral presentations (one of which may be presented in written form instead) and participation in a panel presentation constitute the required assignments for the course.

As a WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) course, students can expect to receive extensive feedback on written work submitted over the course of the semester as well as opportunities to meet with the instructor to discuss essay outlines, initial drafts and resubmission possibilities.

Using **someone else's ideas or phrasing and representing those ideas or phrasing as our own, either on purpose or through carelessness, is a serious offense known as plagiarism.** "Ideas or phrasing" includes written or spoken material, of course — from whole papers and paragraphs to sentences, and, indeed, phrases — but it also includes statistics, lab results, art work, etc. "Someone else" can mean a professional source, such as a published writer or critic in a book, magazine, encyclopedia, or journal; an

electronic resource such as material we discover on the World Wide Web; another student at our school or anywhere else; a paper-writing "service" (online or otherwise) which offers to sell written papers for a fee. [Source: Capitol Community College's [guide to plagiarism](#) (based on the MLA style)]

Reading assignments will be drawn from the following selected resources:

REQUIRED:

Downer, Lesley. *Madame Sadayakko: The Geisha Who Bewitched the West*. New York: Gotham Books, 2004.

Nye, Joseph. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

Varley, H. Paul. *Japanese Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (4th edition), 2000.

RECOMMENDED:

Benn, Charles, editor. *China's Golden Age: Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty*. Oxford University Press USA, 2004.

Craig, Timothy. *Japan Pop!: Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.

Jungmann, Burglind. *Painters as Envoys : Korean Inspiration in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Nanga*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Iwabuchi Koichi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Duke University Press, 2002.

Klein, Christina. *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945 – 1961*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Martinez, Dolores (editor). *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture : Gender, Shifting Boundaries and Global Cultures* (Contemporary Japanese Society). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Sansom, George. *The Western World and Japan, a Study in the Interaction of European and Asiatic Cultures*. New York: Random House, 1949.

Students are responsible for obtaining the above resources on their own. All are available to borrow through university and/or public library systems or for purchase from various online sources. Copies of available titles have also been placed on reserve in the Micheal Schwartz Library. Please contact the instructor if you run into significant problems accessing a specific title.