Proposed Course Module: Addition to JPN 270 Introduction to Japanese Culture

I have been teaching this course for about 10 years, and the topics we discussed in this summer's workshop have given me some good ideas for ways to refresh and renew my teaching plan. This is especially timely, given the recent tragic events that have resulted from the devastating earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan.

The course description is as follows:

**Overview:**

The course is divided into two sections. The first section will provide a brief overview of Japan's geography, climate, and political and cultural history. We will read and discuss examples of pre-modern Japanese literature as primary documents that will give us insight into pre-modern Japanese social structures, religion, thought, and aesthetics. The section will conclude with a discussion of Japanese culture(s) and society at the beginning of the modern period. The second half of the course will consist of student presentations on assigned readings. The presentations should expand on the background we explored in the first half of the course, with careful consideration of Japanese approaches to pressing social issues and problems.

**Goals:**

• Develop a basic knowledge of Japanese historical periods and the cultural landmarks with which they are associated
• Acquire a familiarity with the structures and special characteristics of modern Japanese society
• Approach the readings and discussions with a critical, questioning frame of mind
• Try to see through the stereotypes and myths of Japanese culture that are prevalent in both Japan and in the United States in order to better understand both Japanese culture(s) and their own.

In its previous iteration, the syllabus included one session focusing on the topic of "Nature" in Japan, with the following readings:

The new version of the syllabus will retain this assignment, but will add two more to reflect recent current events in Japan, including readings on (1) the earthquake and tsunami and the historical context of popular distrust of government response to the tragedy, and (2) social changes relating to sustainability.


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Since this is a writing requirement course, another goal is to polish critical thinking and writing skills. Reading should never be a passive activity, but one that should involve contemplation, questioning, and reaction. With this in mind, students are required to submit seven "response papers," informal comments related to the content of a particular session. An eight to ten page paper is also required. Part of some class sessions will be devoted to discussion of various techniques and approaches to develop and complete an analysis or exploration of one or several of the works or topics we will discuss.

Required texts: All assigned texts are available through on-line reserve, www.library.emory.edu. Please bring a copy of all assigned readings to class. Do not come to class without readings. Those who do will be marked absent.

Requirements:

1. Read all assigned texts.
3. Seven written responses to readings.
4. Mid-term and final examination.
5. In-class presentation.
6. One 8-10 page paper. Paper proposal must be submitted in advance and approved by the instructor. The paper may not be related to the in-class presentation topic.

Assessment:

Exams: 20% each.
Presentation: 15%
Paper: 20%
Response papers: 15%
Participation (attendance, contribution to discussion): 10%
Assignment Schedule - This schedule is subject to change. Please be mindful of changes and let me know if you lose your copy.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS</strong>&lt;br&gt;Introduction to the Class</td>
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<td>January 18</td>
<td><strong>Discussing Japanese Culture.</strong> Mason, &quot;Introduction&quot; (handout). Valignano, de Torres, Carletti, &quot;Reports of the Earliest Western Visitors to Japan&quot; from White &amp; Barnet, <em>Comparing Cultures: Readings on Contemporary Japan for American Writers</em> and Douglas McGrey, &quot;Japan's Gross National Cool&quot; (online reserve.)</td>
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<td>February 1</td>
<td><strong>TOPICS (Student Presentation Themes)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Early modern period. Chikamatsu Monzaemon, &quot;Love suicides at Sonezaki&quot; (<em>Sonezaki shinjû</em>) Online reserve. CHOOSE PRESENTATION TOPIC.</td>
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<td>February 8</td>
<td>Samurai. Excerpts from Nitobe Inazô's <em>Bushidô</em>, Cameron Hurst, &quot;Bushidô.&quot;</td>
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<td>February 10</td>
<td>Geisha. Excerpts from Liza Dalby, <em>Geisha</em>; Ayako Kano, &quot;Wifeing the Woman,&quot; from <em>Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan</em>. PAPER PROPOSAL DUE.</td>
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<td>February 15</td>
<td>Imperial(ist) Japan. Brooks, &quot;Peopling the Japanese Empire,&quot; from <em>Japan's Competing Modernities</em>.</td>
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<td>March 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS</strong></td>
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<td>March 17</td>
<td>Nationalism and Nihonjinron (Theories of Japaneseness). Mouser and Sugimoto, &quot;Nihonjinron at the End of the Twentieth Century,&quot; from <em>Japanese Encounters with Postmodernism</em>. Crawford and Foster, &quot;Culture Wars: Japanese History Textbooks and the Construction of Official Memory,&quot; from What Should We Tell the Children?</td>
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<td>March 24</td>
<td>Identities II: Koreans. Sonia Ryang, &quot;Introduction,&quot; from <em>Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin</em>, Susan Chira, &quot;They Call Japan Home but are Hardly at Home,&quot; from White and Barnet, <em>Comparing Cultures</em>.</td>
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April 14  Cyberculture. Larissa Hjorth, “Cute@keitai.com,” from Japanese Cybercultures, Gottlieb and McLelland; Ito, Okabe, Mitsuda, Personal, Portable and Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life (excerpts).


April 21  Conclusion. FINAL DRAFT OF PAPER DUE.

TAKE-HOME FINAL due Friday, April 29, 5:00 p.m.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

February 1  Propose presentation topic
February 3  Propose paper topic
February 10  Paper proposal
February 24  Midterm (due in class, at class time)
March 22  First draft
April 7  Second draft
April 21  Final draft
April 29  Final exam (at REALC office, 5:00 p.m.)

Presentation due dates will be announced February 3.