

The Reconnaissance Japan (RJ) Program at J. F. Oberlin University  
Content Course Descriptions for 2017 Academic Year

Japanese culture (Spring; 4 credits)

What is culture? What is Japanese culture? Is there anything uniquely Japanese? How can we study, analyze, and understand Japanese culture and the people? This course aims first to enable students to learn the basic perspectives and methodologies of Culture Studies in social science, and then to apply them to the understanding of contemporary Japanese cultural scenes. How do foreigners as well as the Japanese themselves view Japanese people and culture? How valid are so called Nihonjinron literatures? What kinds of subcultures coexist in Japan, and how are the Japanese values and beliefs manifested in them? How are traditional cultures maintained and appreciated in contemporary Japan and how are they changing? The course aims to investigate these questions and more, and explore various dimensions of Japanese culture, as Japan, like any culture in the world, is not at all monolithic or homogeneous. Students' willingness to participate in discussions and to conduct their own research is essential.

Japanese Literature (Spring; 4 credits)

This course will be an introduction to the major works of Japan's literature. It covers the history of Japanese Literature from the earliest times up to today. We will read translated English texts of original Japanese classics in various genres and styles, drawn from major genres of poetry, theater and fiction, and from representative works from different time period. We will analyze these works in relation to the social and cultural history of Japan. This course will also frame development of Japanese aesthetics.

Intro. to Japanese Folklore (Spring; 4 credits)

This course aims at 1) learning the central issues of folklore, 2) understanding what folklorists do, 3) explaining and applying the major theories of folklore, 4) improving cross-cultural communication, 5) recognizing how cultures establish categories and structures, 6) determining how cultural categories and structures are shared or differed between cultures, & 7) improving analytical skills through written analysis of cultural data.

Japanese Women's Literature (Spring; 4 credits)

Japan has produced numerous outstanding women writers in history, from Heian to the present. This course will give students an opportunity to appreciate the special beauty Japanese women's literature offers, and learn about Japan from a gendered perspective. The readings will include different genres from different time frames. The course will give a clear idea of the contributions of Japanese women writers and their responses to the culture and society in which they live. Each of the readings

will be discussed in context of the larger social, cultural and historical significance. The goal of the course is to help students appreciate the unique qualities and literary sensibilities in writings by Japanese women, and form a historical understanding of the significance of a gendered experience and view of the world. Students will learn to engage with each text critically in discussions and writing assignments.

#### Japanese Cinema (Spring; 4 credits)

Cinema offers dynamic ways to learn about a particular country's history, society and culture. By watching crucial films by influential Japanese filmmakers, this course will provide students a unique way of experiencing Japan. Through exploring artistic, cultural, and political implications in representative films, students will learn how Japanese filmmakers explore themes and cultural landscapes pertinent to modern Japanese history. Students will learn to read visual images in context of larger issues of social, cultural or historical significance through creative and critical engagement with the films in discussions and writing assignments. The goal of the course is to help students learn how to search for and analyze aesthetic principles, social-ideological meanings and cultural implications of Japanese films in general.

#### Japanese Classical Dance (Spring; 4 credits)

In this class, Japanese traditional culture is studied through Kabuki dance and Shamisen music. Kabuki is one of the representative traditional theater forms and Shamisen is representative musical instrument of Japan. The course will consist not just of lectures but also actual participation and practice as wearing Kimono, playing Shamisen, dancing Kabuki exercise.

#### Premodern Japanese History (Spring; 4 credits)

This course provides an introduction of premodern Japanese history, and devotes attention to various themes relevant for an understanding of social, political, religious and cultural phenomena. The course will follow a chronological approach, focusing on topics which are critical for the understanding of premodern Japan. Teaching is by means of interactive lectures, supposed by seminar-like discussions. Students are required to deliver presentations twice regarding the topic of the day, and are encouraged to participate actively, express their thoughts and critically evaluate the sources they study. At the end of the course, students could acquired basic knowledge of premodern Japanese history.

#### Doing Fieldwork in Japan (Spring; 4 credits)

"Doing Fieldwork in Japan" is an interactive, hands-on course that allows you to investigate the local community and to learn how to work with various people in an academic setting. Students who wish to take the course should be willing to communicate with those from different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Japanese students and international students are paired up (or teamed up, depending on the number of enrollment) to collaborate on fieldwork projects. There will be field trips and lectures, through which you will obtain information and knowledge about the local community, history, culture and environment; through fieldwork projects, you will have an opportunity to explore the subject of your interest and 'experience' Japanese society and culture on your own.

#### Intercultural Communication (Spring; 4 credits)

In this global era, we face the ever-increasing transnational flows of people, products, ideas, and practices; living across/between multiple cultures is becoming the norm for many of us. It is imperative, therefore, that we recognize our own cultural complexity as well as the need to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts. This course focuses on the role of culture in our everyday lives while cultivating intercultural awareness and communication skills. 'Japanese culture' will be a stimulating backdrop to our academic pursuits, but students will be exposed to other diverse cultures as well.

#### Political Geography of East Asia (Spring; 4 credits)

Since the end of the Cold War, the East Asian region has faced enormous challenges in terms of security, economy, and politics. This course will focus on current geopolitical issues involving in the East Asian region, such as North Korean nuclear development, Japanese northern territorial disputes, the presence of U.S. military bases, and Japanese-Korean territorial disputes. Geopolitics among Asian countries, in particular, the involvement of the U.S. and China in the Asian region, will be discussed.

#### Sino-Japanese Relations (Spring; 4 credits)

Sino-Japanese relations have changed radically during modern times and are now at their worst ever since diplomatic normalization in 1972. This class will provide a detailed introduction to the various issues in Sino-Japanese relations, including, but not limited to, differing historical perceptions, the textbook controversy, visits by Japanese politicians to Yasukuni Shrine, and questions relating to war reparations, Japanese ODA to China, and Taiwanese independence. While the course will focus on current issues, historical background going back to the 19th century will also be introduced as necessary.

#### Tourism in Japan I (Spring; 2 credits)

This course introduces students to the fundamental concepts of tourism and provides an overview of tourism in Japan. Topics include the modern definition of tourism, benefits of tourism development, community development by tourism, and tourism policies. Many Japanese tourist destinations will be used to illustrate the present condition of international and domestic tourism in Japan. Topics also

include the objectives and issues of the new Integrated Resort Development Plan advocated by the Japanese Government.

#### Japanese Cultural Exchanges (Fall; 4 credits)

This course is mainly designed for short-term foreign students. Culture is nowadays considered an important tool not only for enriching society but also for building good relationships with foreign countries. This course examines Japanese international cultural policy, programs and activities, at present and in the past. We also look into various historical aspects of Japanese culture and society in connection with cultural contacts with outside world. Students are encouraged to contribute to the class by providing comparative points of view.

#### Japanese Art (Fall; 4 credits)

This is a survey of Japanese art history. The objective of the course is to have the student acquire knowledge of the foreign influences, trends, major works, special characteristics of Japanese art, and the effect of religious, historical, and social aspects on art. The course covers the early Neolithic (Jōmon) to the Edo period. The emphasis is on sculpture and painting, but applied arts such as ceramics and lacquer ware are shown where necessary. The main types of art shown in the respective periods are: mostly pottery for the prehistorical periods of Jōmon and Yayoi; haniwa figurines, metalware etc. for the Tumulus period; Buddhist sculpture etc. for the Asuka and Hakuhō periods; Buddhist sculpture, crafts in the Shōsōin Repository etc. for the Tempyō period; Esoteric Buddhist sculpture and painting etc. for the Early Heian period; Buddhist art, narrative picture scrolls, ornamented sutra transcriptions etc. for the Late Heian period; Buddhist art, narrative picture scrolls etc. for the Kamakura period; Zen temple gardens, ink painting etc. for the Nambokuchō and Muromachi periods; art related to the tea ceremony, popular themes in painting (Namban painting etc.) and various schools of painting (Kano school, Rimpa etc.) for the Momoyama period; and various schools of painting (schools continuing from the Momoyama period as well as new schools such as Nanga, Maruyama school, ukiyoe etc.) for the Edo period. Lectures are conducted in English accompanied by slides.

#### Modern Japanese History (Fall; 4 credits)

This course will survey the process of and background to the basic events in Japanese history from the 19th to 20th centuries through lectures and discussions, reading primary sources in English translation, showing woodblock prints and photos. The course examines the important changes in politics, diplomacy, society, culture, religion, arts, thoughts and gender in relation to the domestic and global contexts. The course aims (1) to understand the general course of modern Japanese history in the dynamics of modern global history and (2) to foster intellectual imagination for critically understanding the experiences of people in history who confronted the problems of the times.

#### Religions in Japan (Fall; 4 credits)

This course introduces Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity as practiced in Japan. It emphasizes the ritual, philosophical, experiential, anthropological, cultural, and ethical aspects of the three major religious traditions and their interaction over time. Outside speakers including priests and monks will enhance students' learning experience. In addition, field trips to Japanese places of worship where students are introduced to ritual and meditation are envisioned. The class will include readings, presentations, discussions, and papers that emphasize the comparative aspects of faith and the religious experience.

#### The Japanese Economy (Fall; 4 credits)

This course focuses on the stylized features of the Japanese economy from a micro-economic perspective, i.e., at the level of the firm and industry. It relates the organizational structure of the Japanese economy to its shared growth (efficiency + equity) performance.

#### Japanese Politics (Fall; 4 credits)

This course is designed to give students a general understanding of the main features of contemporary Japanese politics. In reaching this goal, the class begins by briefly reviewing Japanese history prior to the Second World War emphasizing Japanese political culture and its development. Only by understanding Japan's past, can students truly understand and appreciate Japan's current political culture. Special attention will be paid to the demise of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the period of national planning and constitution-making of the Meiji period. In examining these eras, attention will be paid to traditional cultural practices and how Japan's political leaders sought to accommodate them while economically, military, and politically modernizing.

#### Japanese Society (Fall; 4 credits)

In the summer of 2015, which marked the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, security-related bills were passed in the Japanese Diet amid huge protests -- a significant departure from Japan's pacifist posture in the postwar era. In May of the following year, Barack Obama landed in Hiroshima, becoming the first incumbent U.S. President to visit the city since August 1945. A historic event in the eyes of many Japanese, the entire process of Obama's visit was broadcast live, nationwide, on NHK. Even after more than seven decades, Japan has been living the 'postwar' period, which characterized various aspects of its culture, society and politics. Is it going to change from this point on and, if so, how? Throughout the semester, we will explore the diversity and complexity of Japanese society and examine current issues/problems and their historical roots. We will also review the recent changes and developments in Japanese society, including the repercussions of the 3/11 triple

disaster in 2011. Be sure to keep up-to-date on what is happening in Japan and in the world.

#### Women in Japan (Fall; 4 credits)

Do you want to learn and better understand people who constitute half of the population in Japan? Yes, they are Japanese women. To look at Japan from the standpoint of women gives you deeper understandings of Japanese history, family, marriage, and human relationships. Japanese women are found to be one of the major topics of interest among the observers and scholars of Japan around the world. Nevertheless, images and descriptions of Japanese women as docile, submissive, and fragile beings are still dominant in many foreign (particularly Western) nations. How accurate are these images? Do you know that ancient Japan was probably one of the most gender equal societies in the world? But today, the status of Japanese women, especially in the occupational world, is considerably behind compared with that of other developed countries and some Asian countries. What happened to the Japanese women and is happening to them now? And how are Japanese women portrayed in the media both domestic and overseas? This course will examine the changing positions of women in Japanese society from ancient times to the present, and analyse the social and cultural factors influencing the life of today's Japanese women, as well as critical issues and challenges they are facing in the 21st century. Movies which describe Japanese women in very different ways will also be shown for discussion (and enjoyment, of course.)

#### Comparative Culture (Fall; 4 credits)

This course is designed to provide students with a general understanding of society, culture, and ethnic diversity in contemporary Japan by way of contrast with the United States and other countries. The course begins with an overview of the natural environment, geography, history, and other general aspects of Japan. Then we will examine contemporary cultural and ethnic diversity in Japan and the United States, including issues such as language.

#### History of US-Japan Exchanges (Fall; 4 credits)

The US-Japan relationship is one of the closest and strongest bilateral relationships in the world. The total GDP of these two nations accounts for 30% of the global GDP. The importance of this relationship is significant not only for the United States and Japan, but also for the rest of the world. However, the US-Japan relationship has not been without major conflicts, problems, and serious misunderstandings throughout history. The two nations greatly differ in their history and traditional cultures, although there are many affinities in their social values as well. Just like two individuals with different backgrounds who sometimes struggle in maintaining a good relationship, the two countries have needed to work hard as their expectations for each other change over time. Furthermore, how equal or unequal this partnership is in reality has often been questioned. This course will examine multiple dimensions of the exchanges between the United States and Japan from

historical, military, political, and economic perspectives, as well as those on the individual level. Key figures and individuals who contributed to the different aspects of US-Japan exchanges will be introduced, and the present situation, challenges, and the future directions the two countries might share will also be explored.

#### Sociology of Children in Japan (Fall; 4 credits)

This class is to learn about sociology of children in Japan. This course is on learning about children's society of Japan. Traditional child-rearing in Japan and quickly shifting to modern parenting and children's living environment too much to change. Changes in environment and culture are giving effect to the child or from a historical perspective, explore the problems of children society of modern Japan.

#### Japanese Management I; Japanese Management II (Fall; 4 credits)

This course is designed for English-speaking students interested in management issues, especially in the areas of human resources management and business enterprise management. It will use a comparative and international point of view. Students will be asked to make a presentation and participate actively in discussions. Guest speakers from major Japanese companies will also be invited.

#### Japanese Theater (Fall; 4 credits)

The course introduces students to Japanese theatrical culture and dramatic works. We will survey the development of traditions and diversity of topics, acting styles, cultural and social background, through historical, literary, and theoretical readings.

#### Tourism in Japan II (Fall; 2 credits)

The customer service of the Japanese hospitality industry is ranked at the world's top level. Dubbed "omotenashi", the service provided by Japanese ryokans and hotels attracts many overseas travel repeaters both business and pleasure. The students of this course will first study the science of the hospitality in the tourism industry, followed by analysis of the actual minute Japanese service enjoyed by the travelers. The study will focus the relationship of the service provided and the customs and characteristics and the psychology of the Japanese people. Japanese inns known for their high standards of omotenashi will be presented in the class, together with the introduction of surrounding tourism area.

#### Modern Japanese Literature and Society (Fall; 4 credits)

This course will introduce students to the Japanese experience of modernity expressed in personal narratives, a unique genre of literature. These narratives, i.e. memoirs, autobiographies, letters, diaries and personal essays, provide unique ways of understanding modern Japan's sociopolitical dynamics and cultural

transformations. The readings will focus on Japan's change from a feudal society into an industrialized, and then postmodern, nation through these themes: sociopolitical transformation, war, gender roles, cultural diversity, popular imagination, spiritual discontent and precarity. The goal of the course is to help students grasp essential themes and issues characteristic of modern Japan. Discussions will compare and contrast the multifaceted views of Japan to make sense of the larger framework of Japan's engagement with modernity.