

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

THE ROOTS OF JAPANESE CULTURE AS SEEN IN THEATER AND ART

Lecturer(s)	OSHIMA, AKIRA M.
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2024 Spring (1st Half)
Day/Period	Mon.4/Fri.4
Campus	Mita
Classroom	436
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	84218
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Grade Type	S, A, B, C, D
K-Number	CIN-CO-00133-212-01

[▼ Detail](#)

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

Contents, Objectives, Teaching Method, Intended Learning Objective

Japan has a long and rich history and tradition. In past times, this tradition has served as a way of uniting very different times and social groups. But in this modern age, this history and tradition has become unfamiliar. This course will outline this history and also suggest way to both put it together and to question it.

The course will center on lectures featuring Power Point slide shows and will have short required readings. There will be no final exam, but grading will be based on 3 worksheets and a 5-page final essay.

Course Plan

Lesson 1

History, Narratives and Identity

Class 1

Mon. April 8

Japan seems to be unified and homogeneous. But this feeling has been created by persistent narratives that change and are re-established in different periods.

Lesson 2

Possible Pathways to Find Diversity: Geography, Anthropology and Religious Ways of Thinking

Class 2

Fri. April 12

There has always been strong local variation in Japan. This can provide possible points to question the dominant narrative.

Lesson 3

History and Literature: The Asuka (538 – 710), Nara (710 - 794) and Heian Periods (794 - 1185) and the Ancient Chronicles (Kojiki and Nihon Shoki).

Class 3

Mon. April 15

These periods mark the consolidation of the Japanese state. In literature this created the historical chronicles and a great poetic anthology.

Lesson 4

Classical Aristocratic Court Culture: Waka Poetry

Class 4

Fri. April 19

In the Heian Period (794 - 1185), culture centered on the aristocratic class around the imperial court. This created a poetic language and stories like "The Tale of Genji" that became the standard for classical culture until the present.

Lesson 5

"Ise Monogatari" and Visual Arts

Class 5

Mon. April 22

"The Tales of Ise" are a series of poems that grow into short episodes about the legendary lover Ariwara no Narihira. Many of the episodes feature iconic images that were both the foundation of classical culture and show the changing views of the images of the tradition.

Worksheet 1: Intro through classical

Lesson 6

The End of the Hegemony of the Imperial Court: The Late Heian Period, the Kamakura Period (1185 - 1333) and "The Tales of the Heike (Heike Monogatari)"

Class 6

Fri. April 26

A war between the Genji and Heike military clans moved the center of political power away from Kyoto to Kamakura dominated by the warrior class. On the one hand, there was the continued cultural dominance of imperial aristocratic culture. On the other hand, there was the gradual creation of a warrior class with a distinctive character.

"The Tales of the Heike" tells the story of the rise and fall of the Heike clan and the wars that ended the Heian period. But far from being just a war tale, it is an epic novel that treats the enemy with compassion and gives full expression to the stories of the women involved.

Lesson 7

Muromachi History and Culture

Class 7

Mon. April 29

The Muromachi Period (1333 - 1568) is a key period in Japanese cultural history that saw the creation of the Noh and Kyogen theaters and the tea ceremony. But it also was a very turbulent age and even with these touchstones of Japanese culture, there was an immense range of variety and depending on what is valued as iconic, the picture of Japanese culture changes dramatically.

Lesson 8

Noh Theater

Class 8

Fri. May 10

This unit will focus on the history and conventions of noh, and two noh plays, "Atsumori" a play focusing on the world of warriors based on an episode in "The Tales of the Heike" and "Izutsu" based on the "Tales of Ise."

Lesson 9

Kyogen Theater

Class 9

Mon. May 13

This unit will focus on the history and conventions of kyogen and two kyogen plays, "Two in One Hakama (Futari Bakama)" and "The Moon Viewing Blindman (Tsukimi Zato)."

Worksheet 2: Muromachi Culture

Lesson 10

Edo History and Culture

Class 10

Fri. May 17

After a period of warring domains, in the Azuchi-Momoyama Period (1568 - 1600), Japan was gradually reunified under the warlords Oda Nobunaga and then Toyotomi Hideyoshi. They created a brash, florid form of Muromachi culture. In turn, Japan was controlled by Tokugawa Ieyasu who began a long period of peace ruled from his capital in Edo (the old name for Tokyo).

The Edo Period (1600 - 1868) was marked by a refinement of Muromachi culture as elite culture of the samurai class, but also the creation of a distinctive commoner culture that included the kabuki theater and the Bunraku puppet theater. But over the course of the Edo period, all these cultural forms changed with major social and economic changes that led to the modern world.

Lesson 11

Kabuki

Class 11

Mon. May 20

This unit will focus on the development of the kabuki theater and the development of two acting styles, the bombastic aragoto style and the acting of onnagata (men specializing in female roles).

Lesson 12

Kabuki: "Narukami (The Thunder God)"

Class 12

Fri. May 24

This unit will focus on a representative kabuki play that is structured as a confrontation between an aragoto character and a female character played by an onnagata.

Lesson 13

Puppet Theater

Class 13

Mon. May 27

The Bunraku puppet theater was a sophisticated, adult theater which created some of the monuments of Japanese drama and literature. This unit will also examine a masterpiece of puppet theater by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, "The Love Suicides at Sonezaki (Sonezaki Shinju)."

Worksheet 3: Edo Culture

Lesson 14

Meiji Transition

Class 14

Fri. May 31

With the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan embarked on an ambitious program of modernization and Westernization. Japanese tradition was once more reconsolidated and the images and characters of the past were mobilized to support the new state. But the tradition was once more discredited with defeat in World War II. The

conclusion will look at this process as we can see it in songs created for use in the schools.

Due Mon. June 1: Final 5-page paper

Other

Review

Method of Evaluation

Grading will be based on 3 worksheets and a final 5-page paper.

Textbooks

There is no textbook, but all required reading will be posted online.

Reference Books

I will prepare a comprehensive reading list for further exploration.