

Business Communication (Spring)

Understanding Japanese Culture for Business Communication

Instructor: Prof. David Shea

Elective / Basic Subjects / 2 credits

In this course, we will try to develop knowledge of the customs and ways of thinking that influence communication in Japan, with the goal to promote successful interaction and social integration. Each week, we will read and discuss research dealing with such topics as work arrangements, leisure/play, gift giving, language politics, gender roles, the position of minorities, social hierarchies, and (not least) food. We will also talk about how customs and worldviews are shaped by nationalism and class differences. In addition, we will consider these issues from comparative angles, to better understand how similar trends are manifest in other countries outside Japan.

The course will be conducted entirely in English, and everyone is expected to participate actively. Enrollment is open to both students from Keio and exchange students from abroad. For international students, the course will help negotiate living and working in Tokyo, while for Japanese, the class will allow fresh perspectives on the familiar. Classroom activities will include Q&A, student presentations, and seminar-style small group and whole-class discussion. There will be weekly writing assignments along with a semester-final research paper, based on a chosen topic of interest.

Course Plan:

- No.1 Introductions & overview of key issues/approaches
- No.2 Getting along and fitting in: Hierarchies and worldviews
- No.3 Languages of Japan: Nihongo, gairaigo, English as a lingua franca
- No.4 Pop culture, cool Japan: Manga, anime and brand nationalism
- No.5 Working for a living: Labor, shushoku, economic conditions
- No.6 Taking free-time seriously: Leisure and play
- No.7 Gendered roles: Housework and girly men
- No.8 Communication as belonging: Ethnic minorities
- No.9 The culture of food: Taste, aesthetics, identity
- No.10 Gift giving as social glue
- No.11 Cultural nationalism in a globalizing world
- No.12 Life on the margins: Homeless and the handicapped
- No.13 Family matters: The ties that bind
- No.14 Final Presentations
- Other Independent project: Reading and research

Method of Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the quality of in-class participation, completion of all homework assignments, and carrying out an original final research project.

Textbooks:

There will be no assigned textbook. All readings will be placed on reserve in the library, distributed to students in class, or made available online at the <keio.jp> website. In general, we will read 1-2 articles (about 20-25 pages) per week. Students will also be responsible for collecting articles associated with their individual research projects.

Reference Books:

- Bestor, V.L., Bestor, T.C. & Yamagata, A. (Eds.) (2013). *Routledge handbook of Japanese culture and society*.
- Hirata, K. & Warschauer, M. (2014). *Japan: The paradox of harmony* New Haven: Yale.
- Iwabuchi, K. (2015). *Resilient borders and cultural diversity*. London: Lexington.
- Kelly, W.H. (2002). Karaoke and the seriousness of play in Japan. In Hendry & Raveri (Eds), *Japan at play*. London: Routledge.
- Sugimoto, Y. (Ed.) (2010). *The Cambridge companion to modern Japanese culture*.

Lecturer's Comments to Students:

This class seeks to be challenging yet interesting and possibly even fun. Students should be energetic, with a sense of creativity and curiosity, attentive and ready to express ideas in English ... even if you are not confident! Because discussion of the reading assignments is the central component of the class, everyone must do the homework and be prepared each week. There will be a selection to limit enrollment if the number of applicants exceeds the quota.

Questions/Comments:

Students can ask questions any time before or after class, or email the instructor at <shea[atmark]fbc.keio.ac.jp>. Feel free to make an individual appointment. I am happy to speak with students whenever time is available.