SO 363 INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE SOCIETY AND CULTURE
IES Abroad Tokyo

DESCRIPTION:
This course is an introduction to contemporary Japanese society and culture. The course will introduce students to various facets of Japanese society, and dig beneath the surface to explore the structural and historical underpinnings of contemporary Japan. Topics covered range from class/education, gender/sexuality and ethnicity/cultural identity to technology, social isolation and disaster. Students will be expected to keep up with readings, contribute to class discussion, and in lieu of a final paper, to design and complete their own research project related to modern or contemporary Japan.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:
This course provides a survey of some of the central issues characterizing contemporary Japanese culture and society. It focuses on values, institutions, processes and patterns of social change against the background of history and tradition on the one hand, and on the other, the ways in which Japan is now having to redefine its place in the world order and in East Asia specifically. The course will expose the student to the main areas of debate in contemporary Japanese society through perspectives from the social sciences and humanities.

The course will focus on classroom discussion, and students will give one or more presentations in class. We will read academic articles pertaining to each topic, and discuss how the reading relates to issues and problems in Japanese society today. In addition to the assigned readings, you are encouraged to familiarize yourself with, and relate to current issues through the optional readings, news sources such as The Japan Times and The Mainichi, or similar material. Through this course, students should come away with an understanding of Japanese society that is complex and nuanced, an ability to apply critical perspectives on contemporary culture, and a curiosity to find out more!

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:
If you work hard to learn together, and contribute to a good discussion climate in class, you’ll do great in this course. The requirements are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction paper (2x10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course-Related Trip report (2x10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Final paper</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<th>Grade scale</th>
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Readings and Reaction Papers
All assigned material will be available through Moodle, so you do not have to purchase any books for this course. Two times throughout the course, you will be responsible for writing a short paper in reaction to a specific reading, and presenting that reading in class. It is all right to be critical, however the goal here is not to find ways to dismiss or deconstruct the text, but to constructively summarize, explain and contextualize the argument as you understand it. Identify and show the parts of the text that you found important, or in need of further explanation or critique. You will probably need at least 500 words to do this, and at least 10 minutes to present the reading in class. In order to support your argument, you may refer to the complimentary readings or other sources, relate the text to contemporary issues, or show excerpts or related media in class.

• If you are presenting, please post your reaction paper and send me any presentation materials (slides and/or links to other media) the night before class at the latest.
• If you are not presenting, please post your thoughts and questions on the assigned readings the night before class at the latest. This is to show that you’ve read and reflected on the assigned piece. Here, as well, you will want to phrase your reactions and questions in a constructive way; instead of pointing to a part you did not understand, for example, you could attempt to provide a better explanation, or the context that you found was missing from the text.

Course-Related Trips and Reports
There will be two course-related trips during the semester. Each one will have a shorter reading assignment, and a brief lecture on-site, but no presentations. Instead, please share your impressions in a report (probably 500 words or more) after the field trip.

Final paper
Throughout the course you will design your own research project, present it in class, and compile a research paper across a series of assignments.

• In week 1, we will share two words which capture what you are interested in learning more about in this course.
• In week 2, three keywords that narrow down our research interests, and how they relate to each other.
• In week 4, you will write short proposals outlining what we want to investigate, along with expected outcomes and obstacles.
• In week 5, share a list of references relevant to your research topic.
• In week 8, you will submit an annotated bibliography summarizing and discussing your collected material.
• Throughout weeks 5, 6, 7 and 8 we will all present the results of our research in class: this will be a chance to refine your interests, answer questions and get feedback from me and other students.
• Final papers are due before class, week 10. I will do my best to have comments, corrections and questions ready by the following week. You may resubmit your amended paper by our last class for extra credit.

About plagiarism: Always give credit and make it clear when you use somebody else’s work (including Wikipedia and other online material). When in doubt, ask me or consult online resources such as this guide.

Attendance and Participation
You are strongly encouraged to prepare and participate actively throughout the entire course. This includes:
• reading and taking notes
• completing assignments
• coming to class on time, with your reading notes and questions ready
• contributing to class discussion to make it as useful and productive as possible for yourself and your fellow students.
Whenever possible, please let me know in advance about your reasons for missing class, being late, or leaving early. If you are in need of any accommodations, or feel uneasy about a particular topic or assignment on the syllabus, please also let me know as soon as possible.

Technology
We will be using Slack for most course-related communication outside the classroom. Assignments can also be found on Moodle. You can always contact me on Slack, including urgent matters, or by email. In the classroom, please turn your cell phone off or to silent. Most of the time you may use larger devices to access readings and take notes, but please refrain from
unrelated activity (for example, posting on image boards or scrolling through social media feeds) but this might change if it turns out that technology becomes a distraction. If you fall victim to sleepiness, boredom, or the uncontrollable urge to look at social media, please contribute to discussion or ask a question instead — that might help wake you up!

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of the course students will be able to:
• Understand in a comprehensive manner key themes underpinning contemporary Japanese society and culture.
• Develop a foundation for detailed and critical analysis of specific aspects of Japanese society, economy, politics and popular culture.
• Utilize methods of social and cultural analysis, means of social observation and techniques for overcoming ethnocentrism.
• Develop and refine independent research and writing skills.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Following the attendance policy of IES Abroad Tokyo, attendance to all class meetings is strictly required for the students. In other words, students are required to attend every class meeting including course-related trips.

The format for classes makes missing a single class equivalent to missing a full week during a regular semester. Unexcused absences will therefore result in significant grade penalties. The first unexcused absence will result in a penalty of one-third of a letter grade from your final grade; additional unexcused absences will result in a penalty of one of letter grade for each additional absence. That is, one missed class turns an A into an A-, two missed classes turns it into a B-, three turns it into a C-, and so on. An absence is considered “excused” only if it is unavoidable due to illness or other health conditions, or for other reasons approved by the instructor in advance.

CONTENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>• Mauss, Marcel (1973) “Techniques of the body”, <em>Economy and Society</em> 2:1.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An introduction to the content of the course. Basic</td>
<td>• Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko (1993) “Rice as self, paddies as our land” in <em>Rice as Self: Japanese identities through time</em>.</td>
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<td>modern and contemporary history influenced the</td>
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<td>recent development of Japanese society and its</td>
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<td>values and institutions? Differing paradigms for</td>
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<td>understanding Japanese society. Self-</td>
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<td>introduction: one person, two words. Set up Slack</td>
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<td>and Moodle. Assign readings. Fill out survey on</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Slack after class.</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Cultural uniqueness, holism, <em>nihonjinron</em></td>
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<td>Difference and identity; models of cultural</td>
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<td>comparison and distinction. “Who are the</td>
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<td>Japanese,” and why did this question come to</td>
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<td>dominate Western perspectives on Japan? How have</td>
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<td>the answers changed to</td>
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this question across time, and what can they
tell us about Japanese self-images?

and The Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture.

- Skim through Mauss first. You don’t have
to comment on it, but with your reading
response to the other texts, reflect on
your time in Japan so far: what strikes you
as significant in terms of bodily habits,
regimes, disciplines?

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**Week 3**

**Course-Related Trip to Yasukuni Shrine**

We will gather at an easy-to-find café next
to the Budokan, where I will provide a brief
lecture before guiding the group to the
grounds of Yasukuni Shrine, celebrating its
150th year, and the last day of the *Annual
Spring Rites*. Here we will take a brief look at
the facilities’ pseudo-official
memorialization of war, after which those
interested may stay longer to visit the
excellent exhibitions of the Yushukan, or
enjoy the surroundings. I’ll buy drinks for
everyone, but tickets to the Yushukan are
400 yen ($4).

Meet at 14:30 at "The Forest Kitanomaru"
next to Budo-kan in Kitanomaru Park.

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**Week 4**

**War and memory, remembering/forgetting**

Imperial pasts; historical relations with the
United States and the rest of the world.
Remembering and forgetting the war.
Reading and writing the constitution.

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**Week 5**

**Class, education, democracy**

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**Recommended:**

- Yomiuri Shimbun (2005) *Yasukuni: Behind
the Torii: From government-run shrine for
war heroes to bone of contention.*

- Dower, John (1999) “What do you tell the
dead when you lose?” in *Embracing
Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War 2.*

- Please also read this brief request to
visitors.

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**Recommended:**

- Dower, John. 1986. “Patterns of a Race
War” and “Know Your Enemy” in *War
Without Mercy: Race and Power in the
Pacific War.*

- Igarashi, Yoshikuni. 2000. “The Bomb,
Hirohito, and History: The Foundational
Narrative of Postwar Relations between
Japan and the United States” In *Bodies of
Memory. Narratives of War in Postwar


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**Recommended:**

- Watch “Know Your Enemy: Japan”
(1945). We will watch excerpts of this
propaganda classic in class, but if you are
interested, the whole film is available
courtesy of the U.S. National Archives.

- Slater, David H. (2013) “Social class and
social identity in postwar Japan.” In
Victoria Lyon Bestor & Theodore C.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Family, gender, generations, demographics</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Socialization, family, gender and aging. Patterns of marriage, divorce, and reproduction. Those with families, and those without; being inside the system, and those on the outside.</td>
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<td>Bestor (eds), <em>Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society</em>.</td>
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<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Minorities/majorities</th>
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<td>Discrimination (buraku, zainichi, yakuza, etc) and immigration; migrant labor and refugees. Thinking about ethnicity and cultural nationalism in Japan.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sugimoto, Yoshio (2014) “‘Japaneseness,’ ethnicity and minority groups” in <em>An Introduction to Japanese Society</em>.</td>
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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Center/periphery, urban/rural</th>
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<tr>
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<td>History and ecology; urbanization, nostalgia, furusato.</td>
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<td>Walker, Brett. L (2011) “Copper mining and ecological collapse” in <em>Toxic</em></td>
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### Week 9
**Course-Related Trip to G-Cans (Metropolitan Area Outer Underground Discharge Channel)**

The G-Cans project is the world's largest underground flood water diversion facility, a massive underground waterway built to protect Tokyo from flooding during the monsoon seasons.

### Week 10
**Disaster**


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**Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan**

- Yano, Christine R. "Enka as Engendered Longing: Romance, Furusato, 'Japan'” in Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song

Pick one of the below. Some classic songs to listen to while reading:

- Kasagi Shizuko - Tokyo Boogie Woogie
- Misora Hibari - Kanashii Sake
- Miyako Harumi - Anko Tsubaki
- Yashiro Aki - Namida-goi

At a karaoke parlor, sing (at least) one Japanese song. With your reading response, tell us which song you sang and why, along with the lyrics.

**Recommended:**

- Tansman, Alan (1996) “Mournful tears and sake: the postwar myth of Misora Hibari”. In John Treat (ed.) Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture
<table>
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<th>Week 11</th>
<th>Popular culture, technology, communication</th>
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<td>Leisure and entertainment, consumer politics, fandom and desire. Anonymity and social anxiety; new ways of being alone and together.</td>
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Disaster recovery and management. Earthquake culture/nuclear culture; volunteerism and nationalism; Godzilla and other monsters

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Julian Stringer (eds): *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*

- Read Yomota (it’s short) and then pick one of the remaining two articles. Watch Shin Godzilla (2016). If you’ve already seen it, watch Godzilla (2014) instead. If you’ve seen both, watch the original Godzilla (1954).

Recommended further reading:


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Read Warner, at least the first few pages, and keep it in mind for the other readings. Go make a few comments on Niconico or 2channel to get a feel for the interface. Recommended:

- Saito, Tamaki (2011) “The psychopathology of Otaku” in *Beautiful Fighting Girl*
- Nakamura, Karen (2013) A Disability of the Soul: An Ethnography of Schizophrenia and Mental Illness in Contemporary Japan
### Week 12

**Future/death (robots)**

Aging and dying, population decline and replacement. Robots and automation. The Olympics as event horizon; “post-2020” Japan.

- Kitanaka, Junko (2012) Depression in Japan: Psychiatric Cures for a Society in Distress

### COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:
- Yasukuni Shrine
- Metropolitan Area Outer Underground Discharge Channel

### REQUIRED READINGS:
- Dower, John (1999) “What do you tell the dead when you lose?” in *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War 2*.
• Warner, Michael (2002) “Publics and counterpublics” in *Public Culture* 14:1
• Yano, Christine R. "Enka as Engendered Longing: Romance, Furusato, 'Japan'"' in Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song

**FILMOGRAPHY:**

• “Know Your Enemy: Japan” (1945).

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

• Dawes, James (2014) Evil Men.
• Kitano, Junko (2012) Depression in Japan: Psychiatric Cures for a Society in Distress
• Nakamura, Karen (2013) A Disability of the Soul: An Ethnography of Schizophrenia and Mental Illness in Contemporary Japan
• Saito, Tamaki (2011) “The psychopathology of Otaku” in *Beautiful Fighting Girl*
• Sugimoto, Yoshi (2014) “‘Japaneseness,’ ethnicity and minority groups” in *An Introduction to Japanese Society*.
• Tansman, Alan (1996) “Mournful tears and sake: the postwar myth of Misora Hibari”. In *John Treat* (ed.) *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*