First-Year Seminar: Contemporary Japanese Society

1. Date and Time
Wednesday, 2nd period (10:30–12:00)

2. General Description
Thematic exploration of key issues in postwar and contemporary Japan.

There are two categories of goals: content and skills. By the end of the term:
1. You will be conversant with many issues and narratives about contemporary (post-bubble) Japan, and will have a critical understanding of major themes and issues in Japan today.
2. You will be a more efficient and critical reader of primary and secondary source materials, and an improved writer, editor, and discussion leader.

In short, you will improve your reading, writing, and critical thinking skills while learning about contemporary Japanese society.

3. Course Content
This is a seminar on issues in postwar and contemporary Japan. It will provide a basic overview of key themes for understanding Japan, and a jumping off point to pursue themes of interest in future classes and research.

The course is not a lecture. You cannot slack off. You cannot “fake it.” You must complete the readings to be involved in the discussions, and must be involved in the discussions to receive a good grade.

Schedule
2. “Japanese culture”
3. Postwar social formation
4. Hard work
5. Gender I
6. Gender II
7. Young Japanese I
8. Young Japanese II
9. Leisure and consumption
10. Homelessness
11. Seniors and death
12. 3/11
Assignments
The work in this course is not limited to reading and discussion.

1. **Lead discussion** at least once, with at least one partner (depending on enrollment). Student-led discussions will begin with Week 7. You will sign up in advance. You must meet with me for about 30” prior to class (by appointment) to prepare. Guidelines provided separately.

2. Produce a **final project**. You may write a seminar paper (5-10 pages), or propose a creative project taking advantage of your unique talents and interests. Write an app, make a movie, curate an exhibit online or off, build a model, etc. Group projects are encouraged (but not coauthored papers). Proposals must be submitted prior to class Week 10. Guidelines provided separately.

3. Make a **presentation** of a “draft” version of your final project. Present your work to the class in Week 12 or 13. Specifics will vary according to student enrolment. Guidelines provided separately.

4. Write one-paragraph **weekly reading responses (précis)** online. Guidelines provided separately.

4. **Textbook**
None. All materials supplied online.

5. **Reference Materials**
To supplement your knowledge of Japanese history as needed, I recommend the library’s electronic copy of:

6. **Evaluation**
Attendance and participation: 30%  
Reading responses (précis): 30%  
Discussion leader: 10%  
Final paper or presentation: 30%
For reference, be aware that a “good” project gets a B. Amaze me and you get an A, disappoint me and you’re looking at a C at best. Same for the course.


7. Additional Information

Plagiarism
Plagiarism (using someone’s work without giving credit) is a serious intellectual and academic offense. When in doubt, cite.

For additional information, please reference the program policy statement: http://www.lit.nagoya-u.ac.jp/english/g30/JACS%20Statement%20on%20Academic%20Integrity%20v1.1%29.pdf
Readings

2. “Japanese culture”
   • Robot duel = Japanese culture ([Youtube](#)) ([Evernote](#))

3. Postwar social formation

4. Hard work
5. **Gender I**


6. **Gender II**

- Week in the life of a Tokyo salaryman ([Youtube](#))
- Effects of Gender Norms on Male Freeters ([Youtube](#))

7. **Young Japanese**


8. **Leisure and consumption I**

- Convenience stores ([Nipponia website](#))
  - Read any two of the eight articles in the Special Feature

9. Leisure and consumption II

10. Homelessness and Labor Instability
• TBA

11. Seniors, death, and dying
   • Skim: Trends in the Japanese Funeral Industry (JETRO 2006)
• Traphagan, John W. 2013. “Japan’s Demographic Disaster.” The Diplomat. February 3.

12. Post-3/11
• TBA