

"An Introduction to Modern Japanese Popular Culture"

JCMU Spring Semester 2007

Mondays 1 PM – 4 PM

Course Syllabus

This course introduces students to some of the key aspects of modern Japan's popular culture. A variety of entertainment, leisure and artistic topics will be examined. Popular culture, in all its fascinating diversity, will be used as a window onto contemporary Japanese society. Students will be encouraged to consider the differences and similarities between Japan and their own country through an examination of how popular culture is consumed and reproduced.

The goals of the course are as follows.

- To introduce students to Japan's contemporary popular culture.
- To enable students to understand the role of popular culture in society, and to encourage them to examine a variety of theoretical methods that can be used for an analysis of such culture.
- To enable students to reflect on the dynamic that exists between "global" popular culture and the variety of ways in which culture is consumed and reproduced in various local settings including Japan, and the students' home countries.

Courses will be taught by members of the academic staff of Shiga University. The staff will bring an extra dimension to the rich variety of learning experiences that are offered in this course by bringing their own individual enthusiasm, interest and academic expertise to the classes they teach.

Grading will be 40% oral presentation, 50% final report and 10% attendance and participation. The report should be submitted in the last class.

Session 1, January 15th : Introduction lesson ASPINALL, MANABE

How do we study society and popular culture? Issues involved in comparing different societies as well as various views that foreigners have had (and still have) about Japan will be presented and discussed.

Session 2. January 22nd : Remembering World War II ASPINALL

This class will focus on the issue of how nations remember traumatic periods in their past. It will focus on forms of remembrance from popular culture (movies, comics and TV dramas) and also look at the controversial debate over history text books.

Session 3. January 29th : “Social Dancing” in Japan ASPINALL

This class will look at the way in which dance styles from foreign countries are imported into Japan and “re-made” in a Japanese way. The class will look at ballroom dancing as well as Latin dance styles like Salsa, Tango and Flamenco each of which has attracted a strong following in Japan.

Session 4. February 5th : Modern Kyogen MATSUMOTO, MANABE

There will be a talk and demonstration by professional Kyogen player, Matusmoto Kaoru. He will talk about both traditional and modern aspects of Kyogen performance.

Session 5. February 19th : Western Images of Japanese Popular Culture. The origins and evolution of Japanese popular culture. MANABE

This class will take an overview of the development of Japanese culture over time, and how Japan is perceived through western popular culture.

**Session 6. February 26th :
Multicultural Japan DEBITO, ASPINALL**

This class will look at the increasing numbers of foreigners living in Japan, and attitudes to internationalization and globalization that are reflected in popular culture. A talk will be given by human rights activist Arudou Debito who is American born but has adopted Japanese nationality.

Session 7. March 5th : Manga ABE, MELVILLE

This class will examine the history of Manga and different types of Manga
Why are Manga so popular in Japan? Can they be exported?

**Session 8. March 12th : Modern Japanese Popular Literature SHIBAYAMA,
MANABE**

This class will look at popular literature, including authors like Mishima Yukio and Murakami Haruki.

Session 9. March 19th : TV and Advertising MELVILLE

What do popular TV and advertising tell us about changing Japanese culture, values and lifestyles?

Session 10. March 26th : Delinquency and social problems in Japan MUNENO, ASPINALL

Many Japanese people are worried about increases in crime, especially among young people and foreigners living in Japan. How have patterns of crime and delinquency changed in Japan? If crime is on the increase, what are the causes?

Session 11. April 2nd : Women in Society; Women at Home KIKUCHI

This class will focus on the changing mentality, action, and role of women in Japan. Women in younger generation do not only value being a good wife or mother, or raising children. More women try to be financially independent and some chose not to marry. It seems the role women play both in society and at home have been changing greatly, but is it really so? If so, in what ways? As some old generation mention (or criticize), are Japanese women getting stronger and men weaker?

Session 12. April 9th: Concluding Class ASPINALL, MANABE

Students will be encouraged to discuss what they have learned about Japan though looking at its popular culture. They will also be asked to consider aspects of the culture of their home countries in comparison to Japan.

Fieldtrip

A one day field trip will also be organized in the Kansai region. Details to be announced later.