

Japan in the Foreign Imagination

Relation to Other Courses

This is a stand alone course. It is not directly related to other Saitama University courses. There is some overlap with the Social History of Postwar Japan.

Prerequisites:

None.

Outcomes:

Students will be able to explain how and why foreign views of Japan have changed in the seventy some years since the end of the Pacific War.

Students will be able to explain the factors that lead Japanese domestic media to distortions and exaggeration of Japanese reality.

Course Description

This course examines foreign (primarily Anglo-American) views of Japan, both contemporary and historical. Knowing the common and often highly distorted images of Japan and the Japanese, both positive and negative, presented in foreign mass media and popular culture is important to both Japanese and foreign students. These images have been and continue to be significant in Japan's diplomatic and economic relations with other countries. Moreover, the mechanisms that distort the foreign view of Japan also work to distort the Japanese view of foreign countries. Teaching students how to recognize distorted images of foreign countries and peoples is a major goal of this course.

Course Format

Lectures supplemented by documentary videos. Questions are welcome at any point.

Session Topics

- 1 Japan Cool vs Cool Japan - Introduction to the Course
- 2 Japan Cool in Europe and America
- 3 Japan Cool vs Cool Japan
- 4 Japan Robotic - Astro Boy, Asimo, and Fukushima Dai-Ichi
- 5 Japan Cruel - The Pacific War Legacy
- 6 Japan Sick - Japanese Social Problems Seen from Afar
- 7 Japan Aging - The Baby Bust and Population Change
- 8 Japan Bizarre - The Extraordinary Made Ordinary
- 9 Japan Kink - Sex Obsessed or Sexless
- 10 Japan Xenophobic - The Hard Lot of Gaijin in Japan
- 11 Japan Concrete - The Japanese Unnatural Environment
- 12 Japan Leading - Japan as Number One
- 13 Japan Cramming - The Best and the Brightest Rule?
- 15 Japan Inept - Politics and Administration Seen From Abroad
- 15 Japan Unique - Japan in the Japanese Imagination

Required Work

Essay examination at the end of the term (100%) based on topics specified by the instructor OR a report on subjects chosen by the student (100%). In either case the written work is prepared outside of class. There is no in-class examination.

Evaluation Criteria

Appropriateness of topic, depth of research, clarity of expression. Allowance is made for those who are not native speakers of English.

Textbook

There is no text book as such. Appropriate readings will be introduced in the lectures and made available through the web site maintained by the instructor.

Reference Readings

- Christopher P. Hood, **Japan: The Basics** (Routledge, 2015)
- Sugimoto and Mouer, **Images of Japanese society: a study in the social construction of reality** (Routledge, 2015)

Message to Students

Feel free to bring up topics not on the syllabus.

Mail Address

ehkuso@gmail.com

Office Hours

No office at Saitama University and thus no office hours. I will, however, be happy to meet with students during the lunch break.

Course Home Page

- <http://www2.gol.com/users/ehk/saitama/images>
- <http://ehk.servebeer.com/saitama/images>