

## SOC357 Sociology of Japan

MWF 12:30-1:20

Webster 104

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Instructor

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Office Hours: Mon. 1:30-3:30 or by appt.

### Course Description

This course is an introductory survey of contemporary Japanese society. Using sociological concepts, the course identifies some key patterns that characterize the lives of Japanese people. We will examine the institutions, history and culture that shape these key patterns. The overarching questions that will drive the course are: "How is Japanese society patterned, and why is it the way it is?" "What is ordinary and unique about Japanese society and its people?" Japan is also a rapidly transforming society. Therefore, we will also pay attention to the specific changes Japanese society is undergoing and the driving forces behind the changes.

### Requirements

Students are required to attend class regularly, finish the assigned readings before class, be prepared to share your thoughts in class. You are expected to take the mid-term and final exams in addition to completing all assignments.

### Assignments

Attendance is part of your grade.

### Occasional Written Assignments

I will ask you to write brief response papers on the concepts you learn from the assigned readings, the films we watch, and the significant contemporary issues that we discuss in class. Each assignment will be graded based on the accurate understanding of the material and the quality of reflection to the question being raised.

### Midterm & Final Exams

These two exams will cover the basic concepts and phenomena covered in the readings and lectures. The exams will be simple and short essay questions to be taken in class (not take-home).

### Research Paper

This assignment is to write an analytical paper on some aspect of modern Japanese society. You will: 1. Choose a topic, 2. Read and summarize scholarly resources to identify what we already

know about your topic, 3. Gather original data about your topic or find data that are readily available to you, 4. Analyze and explain Japanese institutions and people's practices by using your data, 5. Write it up as a scholarly paper. The goal is to deepen our understanding of Japanese society and its people and institutions, using your data.

The key to a successful paper is an interesting research question: What is it that you want to know, and what is puzzling about it? Does your data help us gain deeper insight into what we already know? Or does your data show something that we have yet to learn about Japanese society?

You will first submit a research proposal for approval. You will then submit a full draft. And a final paper is due on the last day of class.

Kinds of data you can use:

Original Data: 1. Direct observation of Japanese people at work, play, or home  
2. Interviews or extended conversations with Japanese people

Data Readily Available:

1. Films, novels, TV shows, photographic images, autobiographical writings such as a diary or a memoir, which are about Japan, or produced/written by Japanese. You can treat them as "narratives" or "discourse" or "data".
2. Statistical data, such as large-scale surveys about Japanese economy, attitudes and behavior.

## Grades

Point Distribution:

Class Attendance:	10%
Occasional Writing Assignments:	10%
Research Paper Proposal:	10%
Research Paper:	30%
Mid term:	20%
Final exam:	20%
Total:	100%

Final Grades:

A+: 98 & Above	B+: 88-89	C+: 78-79	D: 60-69
A: 94-97	B: 84-87	C: 74-77	
A-: 90-93	B-: 80-83	C-: 70-73	
F: 59 & Below; All acts against the University Student Code.			

## Academic Integrity:

The UH Student Conduct Code:

([http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct\\_code/proscribed\\_conduct.php](http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php))

I don't anticipate any violations of the Code, but in situations of violation, the case will be forwarded to the Administrator for adjudication, in addition to receiving an F for this course.

### **Learning Assistance:**

Every student at UH Manoa has access to the following offices that offer academic assistance and guidance. Do make good use of our resources!:

Learning Assistance Center: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/learning/>

Writing Center: <http://www.english.hawaii.edu/writingcenter/>

Learning with Disabilities: <http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>

### **Textbook**

McKinsey & Company. 2011. *Reimagining Japan*. San Francisco: VIZ Media.

Referred to as (RJ) below.

Other readings will be posted online.

### **Calendar**

Week 1. Introduction

August 26: Overview of Class

August 28: What are your experiences with Japan?

August 30: March 11 Earthquake and Japan in Transition

Read: Barton (RJ) pp.1-5

Funabashi (RJ) pp. 8-14

Kristof, NYT article (Laulima)

Week 2. History and Geography

Sept. 2: No class

Sept. 4: Japan Today: Geography and Demography

Read: Kerbo & McKinstry, Ch.1.

Sept. 6: History and Memory of the Pacific War

Read: Suzuki, Japan Focus, "Japan's Comfort Women: It's Time for the Truth"

(Optional) Kim "History and Memory: The 'Comfort Women' Controversy"

Week 3. Postwar Economic Development and "Japan Inc."

Sept. 9: The Japanese Miracle and the Developmental State

Watch in class: The Pacific Century (1992): "Inside Japan Inc."

Sept. 11: What Happened to the Japanese Model?

Read: Schaede, "What Happened to the Japanese Model?"

Sept. 13: Status Quo and Future Direction

Read: Yanai (RJ) pp. 59-61

Week 4. Education in Japan I: Cultural Character

Sept. 16: Life in primary school

Watch in class: "Children Full of Life" (2003)

Read: Ghosn (RJ) pp. 53-56

Sept. 18: “Bukatsudo” or Extra-curricular school clubs

Watch in class: “Kokoyakyu”

Read: Cave, “Bukatsudo: The Educational Role of Japanese School Clubs”

Sept. 20: Summary & Discussion

Week 5. Education in Japan II: Stratification and Globalization

Sept. 23: Education as a Stratifying Mechanism

Read: Honda, “The Reality of the Japanese School-to-Work Transition System at the Turn of the Century”

(Optional) Brinton, “School-Work Systems in Post-Industrial Societies: Evidence from Japan”

(Optional) Rosenbaum and Kariya, “From High School to Work: Market and Institutional Mechanisms in Japan”

Sept. 25: Educational Competition and “Exam Hell”

Sept. 27: Education and Globalization

Read: Kariya “From Credential Society to Learning Capital Society”

Shibata (RJ) pp. 336-338

Week 6. Gender and Family

Sept. 30: The “Ie” system

Read: White “Change and Diversity in the Japanese Family”

Oct. 2: Women’s Life course

Read: Brinton, “Christmas Cakes and Wedding Cakes: The Social Organization of Japanese Women’s Life Course”

Oct. 4: Summary: Women and marriage

Week 7 Gender, Family and Work

Oct. 7: Women, Marriage and Work

Read: Iwao, “Marriage and the Family”

Kristof, NYT “Who Needs Love? In Japan, Many Couples Don’t.”

Oct. 9: “Salaryman”

Read: North and Weathers, “Overtime Activists Take on Corporate Titans”

Hayashi (RJ)

Komuro (RJ)

Oct. 11: **MIDTERM**

Week 8 The Changing World of Work

Oct. 14: Freeters and NEETs

Read: Honda, “Freeters: Young Atypical Workers in Japan”

Kosugi, “Youth Employment in Japan’s Economic Recovery,” Japan Focus

Oct. 16: War as a Solution?

Read: Akagi, “War is the Only Solution,” Japan Focus

Oct. 18: Structural Causes

Read: Imai and Sato, "Regular and Non-Regular Employment as an Additional Duality in Japanese Labor Market" in Japan's New Inequality

#### Week 9 Inequality, Work and Poverty

Oct. 21: Single Mothers

Read: Aoki and Aoki, "Invisible Poverty in Japan: Case Studies and Realities of Single Mothers"

Read: Fackler, NYT "Japan Tries to Face Up to Growing Poverty Problem"

Oct. 23: The Working Poor: Traditional Day Laborers and the Emerging System of Just-in-Time Employment

Read: Gill, "Sanya Street Life Under the Heisei Recession"

Oct. 25: Discussion: Possible Solutions

#### Week 10 Film Week

Oct. 28: Watch *Tokyo Sonata*

Oct. 30: *Tokyo Sonata*, continued

Nov. 1: Discussion

#### Week 11 Ethnic Minorities and Foreigners in Japan

Nov. 4: Ainu

Read: Siddle, "Ainu: Japan's Indigenous People"

Nov. 6: Okinawa

Read: Arasaki, "The Struggle Against Military Bases in Okinawa – its history and current situation"

Nov. 8: Ethnic Koreans

Read: Kim, "Blatant Discrimination Disappears, But..."

#### Week 12 Foreigners in Japan

Nov. 11: No class

Nov. 13: Japan and the Global Migration

Read: Douglas and Roberts, Ch.1.

Nov. 15: Aging Society and Migrant Workers

Read: Eberstadt (RJ)  
Glosserman (RJ)

#### Week 13 Violence and Suicide

Nov. 18: Theory on Suicide & Karoshi

Read: Kawanishi, "Suicide by Overwork"

Nov. 20: Bullying

Read: Yoneyama and Naito, "Bullying"

Nov. 22: Homicide Drop in Postwar Japan

Read: Johnson, "The Homicide Drop in Postwar Japan"

#### Week 14 Popular Culture

Nov. 25: "Cool Japan" and "Soft Power"

Read: McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool"

Nov. 27: No class

Nov. 29: No class

Week 15 Popular Culture

Dec. 2: Critique of Cool Japan and What It's Promoting

Read: Miller, "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan"  
Graves (RJ) pp. 411-416

Dec. 4: Food and Identity

Read: Bestor, "Cuisine and Identity in Contemporary Japan"

Dec. 6: Discussion

Week 16

Dec. 9: Review

Dec. 11: **FINAL EXAM**