GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor       Dr. Christine Yano
Class meetings  TuTh 9-10:15, Saunders 345
Office          Saunders 322
Phone           956-4447
E-mail          cryano@hawaii.edu
Office hours    TuTh 2:00-3:00pm, or by appt

COURSE DESCRIPTION: STRUCTURES AND LIVED LIVES

This course takes a critical, multi-perspectival look at contemporary Japan by examining some of its life-course structures: family and childhood, young to middle adulthood, and late adulthood. We will be looking at the ideal models that govern these periods, as well as some of people’s lived experiences in dealing with these structures. In the process, we will attempt to address some of the factors that shape people’s life experiences, including aspects of class, gender, region, nationalism, and globalism in Japan. Our goal is to develop an understanding of the interplay between models and people’s experiences. As we examine concepts, values, arrangements, structures, and behavior which go into the making of culture, we include their construction, challenges, and transformation over time in Japan. Thus, Japanese culture is not static or homogeneous, but always dynamic and heterogeneous.

Film will be an important part of our intellectual endeavor. By combining weekly readings and lectures with feature-length films and critical discussion, students will engage with both the structures that shape contemporary Japan, as well as the “anti-structure” of lived lives and historical contingencies. Students will be asked to write a series of short papers based on the films, incorporating lectures and readings.

Please note that I am deliberately front-end-loading the work for this course – that is, the reading and writing will be heaviest at the beginning of the semester and will taper off toward the end. For example, the two papers are 20 points each, while the final exam is only 10 points. Before Thanksgiving, you will have earned 90% of your grade.

Course Outcomes

The goal of this course is to provide some tools by which students may interpret and understand contemporary Japanese culture and society through the lives of individuals and the structures in which they live. As a result of this course, the student should be able to interpret, for example, a news report on life in Japan with some critical thinking skills. These include understanding: 1) family structures and the ways in which they shape individuals; 2) school systems and some of their educational assumptions and goals; 3) the work place and some of its gendered and economic aspects; and 4) the societal pressures and expectations of a graying population.
Writing-Intensive

This course is designated writing-intensive for good reason. My firm belief is that good writing makes for good thinking and vice versa. Disciplining one’s writing is akin to disciplining one’s thinking. Writing will be an integral part of your learning process in several ways: 1) Short papers incorporating readings and films; 2) reading responses; and 3) in-class writing. Common to all three of these is the requirement that your writing be clear, succinct, and grammatical. I expect any piece of writing that has been done on a computer to be spell-checked and proofread. You should approach these three types of writing in different ways. 1) The papers are the most formal pieces of writing that you will do. We will do peer reviews of each of the papers and you should write knowing that not only I, but also your peers, will be reading these. Please do make use of the Writing Workshop at Kuy415 (956-7619) where you can sign up for half-hour appointments with writing tutors. In addition, make use of my office hours during which I will be glad to read rough drafts of papers. See below for more details. 2) The reading responses are less formal. I will pose questions on the readings and ask you to respond. In many cases, the questions I pose will be big ones that could be answered by quoting the entire book or chapter. Do not do this. Instead, summarize briefly what the author says. In addition, inject some of your own thought to this. Do keep in mind that this should be a response, not a regurgitation. 3) In-class writing is even less formal. For one thing, it is not done on computer and I don’t expect the kind of “perfection” that instant editing, spell-checkers, grammar-checks easily provide.

The bottom line is that writing will be a self-conscious and fully integrated part of this course. Thus, not only will you learn something about Japan through taking this course, hopefully you will end up writing with greater clarity, thought, and care.

Plagiarism has become a serious problem at U.H. as elsewhere. Part of this has been facilitated by the internet, but plagiarism long precedes computer access to other people’s writing. I take plagiarism seriously. If any writing for this course has been plagiarized (i.e., copied without citation from either another person, online, or a published source), I will contact the deans. The student will get an automatic F (i.e. 0 points) for the paper upon first offense, and an F for the course for a second offense. Plagiarism means cheating yourself and others. Do your own work and learn something.

TEXTBOOKS (available at UH Bookstore and on reserve in Sinclair)


*A note on readings. Lectures and readings do not necessarily overlap. Each one is considered a different source of material, information, and engagement with ideas. If you have questions on the readings, please do ask for clarification in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grading will be as follows:
Paper 1  20
Paper 2  20
Final exam 10
Reading responses 30
In-class 20
(Attendance, participation, discussion facilitation team)

GRADING:  90-100 A, 80-89 B, 70-79 C, 60-69 D, below 60 F

PAPERS - 20 points each (total 40 points)
The papers are short – 5-7 pages – and focus on the films in conjunction with the readings and lectures. You must include some discussion of readings AND lectures in your papers, otherwise points will be taken off. In other words, you might write a brilliant paper on a film, but if you failed to mention anything from readings AND lectures, you will get a B at best. Paper assignments will be handed out at least one week before the papers are due.

The format of papers is as follows:
1” margins, all around
10- or 12-point font (i.e., what I have used in this syllabus)
double-spaced
pages numbered
no title page for this length of a paper
no folders or binders (this is a short paper)
stapled

These are standard university requirements and should be followed not only in this course but in others as well.

In addition, PLEASE UNDERLINE YOUR THESIS STATEMENT in your introduction, as well as its restatement in your concluding paragraph. The thesis statement should answer the question: what is the point you are trying to make in this paper?

Some notes on paper writing:
* Get used to sentences that begin, “In this paper, I argue that . . . “
* You should cite the texts (Ogasawara 1998:12) as well as lecture (Yano class notes 09/28/08).
* Each paper should have an INTRODUCTION in which you draw the reader into the subject of your paper and include your thesis statement. It should also have a CONCLUSION which may restate your thesis and possibly end on a provocative note. The INTRODUCTION and CONCLUSION should act as bookends to the body of your paper.
* Each paragraph of the body of your paper should have an organizing point to make and further your general argument/thesis. Every paragraph should have no fewer than 3 sentence, preferably 4-5. 1) intro, 2) bit, 3) bit, 4) bit, 5) conclusion.
* Since each paper specifies the text and refers only to lecture notes for this class, you don’t need a bibliography.
* Remember that writing an academic paper IS DIFFERENT in language use from having a conversation with a friend. One of the best ways of acquiring this difference in your own writing is to READ. Besides the books assigned for this
course, I suggest picking up a copy of *The New Yorker* and reading it as an example of good writing.

* Do not use slang or colloquial expressions. Use “children”, not “kids”.
* I take the paper length seriously. 5-7 pages does not mean 4-1/2 pages nor 7-1/2. The length is assigned for a purpose.

Each paper has two due dates: 1st draft and final draft.

* Note: for the 1st draft papers, please bring in 2 copies of your paper. We will conduct a peer review in class.
* Anyone who does not participate in the peer review will automatically get one point deducted from their paper grade.
* When you hand in your final papers, please include your 1st drafts, your peer reviews, and your final drafts.

In addition, if anyone wants me to look over and comment on your 1st draft papers, I will give you opportunities to do so IF you hand in your paper to me the day BEFORE 1st drafts are due. You may submit these electronically up to 6pm on that day. I will give you comments within 24 hours (keep in mind that the extent of my comments depends in part on how many students take advantage of this opportunity).

Late papers are highly discouraged. I will deduct 1 point per day past due. N.B. If you do not take part in the peer review (i.e. 1st draft), then 1 point is deducted from your paper grade. If you hand in your final paper 1 day late, then 1 point is deducted. If you hand in your final paper 2 days late, then 2 points are deducted. Etc. Do the math!

**READING RESPONSES - 10 points each (total 30 points)**

For every reading assignment, I will ask you questions. Address these questions as you read: 1) Download the questions; 2) Write in your responses *in a different font*. Do not try to do this the night before it is due. Rather, accrue your reading and responses a bit every day.

Toward the end of each unit (and on the same day as discussion), the reading responses will be due. I do not have a prescribed page length for these responses, but you may consider them fairly informal writing - albeit with complete sentences. I expect not only a response to my questions, BUT ALSO SOME COMMENTARY BY YOU ON THE READING. They should be typed, single-spaced, pages numbered, 1” margins.

You will be graded on the quality of your thinking. Please do not paraphrase the book.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION - 20 points**

In a highly interactive course such as this, each student’s daily presence and participation is critical. You will be assessed on the basis of attendance, verbal participation, and completion of in-class worksheets. 10 points for leading class discussion + 5 points for class participation (including any in-class writing) + 5 points for attendance.

Class discussions on readings will be led by students. Sign up for groups in class. If you are a discussion leader, you must send me your answers to the reading questions by 12n the day before your assigned discussion. As leader you will be conducting a small group discussion on the reading, followed by a full-class discussion. You will be evaluated based upon your ability to LEAD the discussion. Your goal is not to provide answers to the questions posed. Rather, it is to generate and shape the discussion itself.
FINAL EXAM – 10 points
The final exam will be handed out in class. If you choose to take it as a take-home exam, it is due on the last day of class. If you choose to take it as a closed-book in-class exam, then you will be taking it on the last day of class. One of the questions will be on the last readings and film Departures. The other question will be from material covering the entire semester.

Extra credit opportunities: maximum 3 points
Throughout the semester, I will announce extra credit opportunities, typically in the form of lectures or events. Attend, write up a summary and REACTION as much as possible in terms of what we have discussed in class, and receive 1 point.

CALENDAR

Introduction
READING:
- Allison, Ch1 - p 1-20
- K-R-L – Introduction, p 1-24
08/23 Themes of the course: precarity/uncertainty, kata (patterned form) and its limits

Childhood: Pressures and Processes of Molding at Home and at School
READING:
H-T – Introduction, Ch1, Ch2, Ch 3, Ch4, Ch7, pp. 1-106, 153-171
08/25 Mother as a central figure; amae (dependency) as emotional template
08/30 Video: “Preschool in Three Cultures”
09/01 Socialization within the family
09/06 Teaching – learning - embodiment
09/08 DISCUSSION and Reading Response #1 due
*09/13 FILM #1 TAMPOPO (1985, director Itami Juzo)
*09/15 FILM #1 – cont.
09/20 PAPER 1ST DRAFT
09/22 PAPER FINAL DRAFT

Adulthood: Family, Workplace, and the Complications of Lived Lives
READING:
K-R-L – Ch 1 (Roberts), Ch2 (Mathews), Ch3 (Kurotani), Ch6 (Nakano), pp. 25-104, 163-182
Allison – Ch 2 – pp. 21-42; Ch4 pp. 112-115 on film “Tokyo Sonata”
09/27 The postwar family/business system
09/29 Masculinity: salaryman model
10/04 Alternative models
*10/06 VIDEO: Shinjuku Boys
10/11 Beyond stereotypes
10/13 *DISCUSSION AND Reading Response #2 due
10/18 FILM #2 Tokyo Sonata (2008; director Kurosawa Kiyoshi) *Note: read Allison p.
112-115 on this film

10/20  FILM #2 cont.
10/25  *PAPER #2 DUE (1st draft)
10/27  *PAPER #2 DUE (final draft)
        Marie Kondo: Tidying as a Gendered Activity

Late adulthood: Nostalgia, Reflection, Leave-takings

READING:
        K-R-L – Ch 7 (Long), pp. 183-201.
        Allison – Ch 5, 6  pp. 122-179
11/01  Approaches to aging: gender
11/03  Longevity and societal implications
[11/08  ELECTION; NO CLASS]
*11/10  Video: Aging in Japan; When Traditional Mechanisms Fail (1990, NHK, Wong AVC)
11/15  Suicide in Japan
11/17  Funerals as consumer culture
11/22  DISCUSSION & Reading response #3 due
11/29  FILM #3: DEPARTURES (2008; director Yōjirō Takita)
12/01  FILM #3: DEPARTURES

Wrap-up
12/06  Hand out final exam; discussion
12/08  FINAL EXAM DUE