SOC357 Sociology of Japan
MWF 12:30-1:20
Webster 104

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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)
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/](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/learning/)
- Writing Center: [http://www.english.hawaii.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.english.hawaii.edu/writingcenter/)
- Learning with Disabilities: [http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/](http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/)

**Textbook**
- 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
- Sept. 11: What Happened to the Japanese Model?
  - Read: Schaeede, “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
  - 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  
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”
   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