

Japan in the Foreign Imagination

海外マスコミにおける日本のイメージ

2016 Fall Saitama University

Mechanics

- Instructor: Earl H. Kinmonth
 - アール キンモンズ
 - 加賀谷亜流
- Format: Lectures, videos, occasional discussion

Course Description

- This course examines foreign (primarily Anglo-American) views of Japan, both contemporary and historical.
- Materials used and discussed range from Hollywood films to academic works by Ivy League professors.

Course Description

- 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.

Course Description

- 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.

Textbook

- No textbook is used. Significant writing pertaining to each topic will be introduced and discussed in the lectures.
- Handouts giving examples for each topic will be available through the home page(s) for this course.

Recommended Readings

- Buruma, Ian **Inventing Japan: 1853-1964** (Random House, 2004)
- Hammond, Phil **Cultural Difference, Media Memories: Anglo-Japanese Images of Japan** (Cassell, 1997)
- Johnson, Sheila K. **The Japanese Through American Eyes** (Stanford University Press, 1988)
- Schodt, Frederick L. **America and the Four Japans** (Stone Bridge Press, 1994)
- Wilkinson, Endymion **Japan Versus the West: Image and Reality** (Penguin, 1981)
- Zipangu **Japan Made in U.S.A.** (Zipangu, 1998)

Required Work – Option 1

- A research paper 10-15 pages in length on a subject of their own choice (within the general rubric of this course) using sources selected by the student.
- Topics from (2) following may be used as the subject for research papers.
- Students who elect a research paper are encouraged but not required to
 - (a) give a class presentation about their chosen subject and
 - (b) allow their paper to be posted on the course web site so that other students may read it.

Required Work – Option 2

- Two essays 5-7 pages in length based selected from a list provided by the instructor and using the readings for this course possibly supplemented by Internet and conventional published sources.
- In Option 1 you choose the subject and sources. In Option 2 the instructors chooses the subject and provides (some of) the sources.

Required Work

- More detailed instructions will be given in a handout distributed later in the semester. The deadline for submissions will be announced later in the course.

Lecture Topics and Themes

- The lecture topics on the syllabus are tentative and subject to change according to
 - The pace of the course
 - Unexpected developments

Japan ? Who's Japan ? When ? Where ?

- Foreign interest in Japan – low and declining except for popular culture (*anime, manga*) and food
- English language writing primarily US and UK
- The “present” going back to the 1980s and the Pacific War (1941-1945) and second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) where issues from the war years are still alive today
- Tokyo – the foreign image of Japan is essentially Tokyo with a bit of Kyoto on the side

Cool Japan vs Cruel Japan

- Cool Japan vs Cruel Japan
 - Historically the image of Japan has swung from positive to negative
 - Currently both very strong positive and negative images exist concurrently
- Positive – anime, pop culture, industrial products, “samurai,” etc.
- Negative – war legacy issues (comfort women, POWs, history textbooks), environmental issues (whaling), discrimination, Fukushima, etc.

Japan Cool vs Cool Japan

- English and Japanese media commonly use the term Cool Japan
 - NHK satellite tv series by this name
 - Discovering what makes Japan cool! COOL JAPAN is a term that describes the growing international interest in Japan. From the worlds of fashion, anime, architecture to cuisine, the cultural aspects of Japanese society that have long been left undiscovered are starting to make a strong impact on global trends.

Japan Cool vs Cool Japan

- Cool Japan
 - Deliberate distortion?
 - Lack of study?
- 2004 Douglas McGray “Japan’s Gross National Cool”
 - Did not use term “Cool Japan”
 - Japan (the country) is NOT cool
 - Cool things come from Japan
 - Japan itself is NOT attractive

Why is Japan itself not cool?

- Whaling
- Comfort women
- Yasukuni Shrine
- Hikikomori
- Suicide
- Discrimination (racial, ethnic, nationality)
- Fukushima

Japan Cool in Europe and America

- American and European interest in Japan
 - Historical, Contemporary
- Manifestations
 - Anime, manga, cosplay, food
 - Ersatz “Japanese” branding
- Japanese expectations of Japan Cool
 - Goodwill
 - Royalty income

Japan Robotic - Astro Boy, Asimo, and Fukushima Dai-Ichi

- What is a robot?
 - Robots in the Japanese imagination
 - Japanese robots in the foreign imagination
 - Why the emphasis on “humanoid robots” in Japan?
- Why are all the robots working at Fukushima “gaijin” robots?



Japan Cruel

The Legacy of War in America and Asia

- Nanjing (Nanking) Massacre 南京大虐殺
- Comfort women 従軍慰安婦
- Forced labor 強制労働
- Politicians making pilgrimages to Yasukuni Shrine 靖国神社参拝 that includes enshrined Class A war criminals A 級戦犯
- Textbooks that “whitewash” history 歴史教科書を歪曲する

Japan Sick – Japanese Social Problems Seen from Afar

- Hikikomori (acute social withdrawal)
- Youth suicide 青少年自殺
- “School phobia” 登校拒否 不登校
- Karoshi 過労死 – death by overwork
- Compensated dating 援助交際
- Parasite singles パラサイトシングル

Japan Aging

The Baby Bust and Population Change

- What is the demographic situation in Japan?
 - How distinctive is the ageing population of Japan?
- Why is the birthrate low in Japan?
 - How distinctive is the low birthrate in Japan?
 - Is the Japanese birthrate low because the Japanese have stopped having sex?
 - Are fewer Japanese women getting married because men do not help with house work and child rearing?
- Does Japan have or will it soon have a labor shortage?
- Does Japan need massive immigration to stave off economic decline?

Japan Kink - Sex Obsessed or Sexless

- Perverse sex (kink) 変体
 - Child pornography 児童ポルノ ロリコン
 - Trafficking 人身売買
 - Senior porn
- Sexless Japanese
- Grass eating men 草食系男性



Japan Bizarre - The Extraordinary Made Ordinary

- Fringe activities presented as normal
 - Bras for men
 - Hired wedding guests for people who have few friends
- Nonexistent patterns presented as reality
 - Women dressing as vending machines to avoid muggers
 - School children licking each other's eyeballs for a sexual thrill (worming)

Japan Cramming – The Best and the Brightest Rule?

- Japanese university entrance
 - (Foreign) Severe university examinations the norm
試験地獄, the so-called examination hell
 - (Actual) Most university students take no examination or only a perfunctory examination
 - Do “cram schools” (塾、予備校) actually cram?
- Japanese Lessons vs an Empire of Schools
 - 1980s admiration vs 1990s criticism

Japan Xenophobic – The Hard Lot of “Gaijin” in Japan

- Discrimination in Japan 人種・国籍差別
- Immigration policy 閉鎖的移民政策
- Perverse refugee policy 難民政策
- Foreign employees in Japanese companies and universities 知的鎖国
- Housing discrimination

Japan Cruel

The Whaling Issue in Foreign and Domestic Media

- Research whaling 調査捕鯨
 - How is whaling presented and sold to the Japanese public?
 - How is Japanese whaling covered in the foreign media?
 - Is eating whale meat really part of Japan's “food culture” 食文化

Japan Leading and Japan Declining

- Japan and the US Economy in the 1980s
 - Admiration - Learn from the Japanese
 - Japan as Number One (1979)
 - Revisionism - Know your enemy and adopt his methods
 - Chalmers Johnson, MITI and The Japanese Miracle (1985)
- Arthritic Japan (2001)
 - What happened to “the Japanese miracle?”
- Can Abenomics resurrect Japan

Japan Unique – Japan in the Japanese Imagination

- Are the Japanese uniquely unique? 日本人は特に独特であるか
- Nihonjinron 日本人論 Nihonbunkaron 日本文化論
Nihonshakairon 日本社会論
- Japan and the Japanese in the Japanese imagination
 - Distorted, exaggerated images and “invented reality” concerning Japan and the Japanese are **NOT** limited to foreign writers
 - Bizarre, distorted, even racist ideas about Japan and the Japanese have often originated in Japan from Japanese writers
- Assertions about Japan and Japanese society often have a political or ideological purpose

Course Themes

- Americans Ain't Got No Culture
 - “Culture” nearly always appears in articles about incidents and social patterns in Japan but NOT in articles about similar issues in the US or UK
 - Failure of Toyota to respond to crashes due to uncontrolled acceleration explained as “Toyota culture” which was a reflection of Japanese culture
 - Failure to respond to crashes caused by faulty parts is NOT being explained in terms of “GM culture” or “American culture”
 - **Conclusion: Americans ain't got no culture.**

Course Themes

- “Westerners” vs Japanese
 - Who are “Westerners?”
 - Americans? Brits? Australians? Italians? Norwegians? Turks? Ukrainians? Russians? Georgians?
 - Do “westerners” have a shared set of values, customs, and life style that can be contrasted with that of “Japanese?”

Course Themes

- Where is “the West?”
 - The EU?
 - Europe west of the Urals?
 - North America (Mexico is in “North America”)
 - Latin America?
 - The US west of the Mississippi?
 - California, Washington, and Oregon?

Course Themes

- Tyranny of terminology
 - Broad terms that mean nothing
 - “The West” “Westerners”
 - “individualism” vs “collectivism”
 - Used by both Japanese and foreign writers
- Tyranny of cliches
 - The nail that sticks out gets hammered down
 - Is “Western society” more tolerant of deviance?

Course Themes

- Neo-racism
 - 19th century racism based on claims of biological superiority
 - 20th – 21st century “racism” based on claims of moral and cultural superiority
 - “Western” ways vs “Japanese” ways
 - “American” ways vs “Japanese” ways

Course Themes

- Most foreign journalists and commentators are clueless, Americans especially so
 - Ignorant of the basic facts of American society
 - Know even less about Europe
 - Example –
 - aging society and low birth rate treated as peculiarly Japanese with peculiarly Japanese explanations
 - Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Korea, and other countries have a demographic profile similar to Japan

Course Themes

- Many foreign journalists and commentators have a superiority complex and sense of rivalry vis a vis Japan, especially Americans
 - Manifested as “neo racism” and assertions of Western or American moral superiority
 - Especially strong among upper middle aged WASPs with Ivy League educations
 - Michael Zielenziger, James Fallows, Michael Crichton, Nicholas Kristof
 - Economic and technology rise of Japan in the 1980s threatened their world view in which America led by WASP men with Ivy League educations was No. 1 in everything.

Course Themes

- Most English language foreign writing about Japan is not about Japan.
 - Invented Japan used to validate American or British culture.
 - “Japanese” are lonely, friendless, and isolated. They have to rent guests for their weddings. Implicit message – All Brits have lots of friends and no one is lonely in Britain.
 - Measurements of the “empowerment” of women show Japan with a very low ranking
 - Articles by Americans do not tell you that the US is way behind Western Europe
 - Americans want to feel superior to Japan, not inferior to Europe

Course Themes

- Data used in journalism and academic writing is often incomplete, specious, or based on different definitions
 - Different definitions
 - Industrial robots, patents – Japanese definition very broad leading to high numbers for Japan relative to countries that use a narrow definition.
 - Specious もっともらしい
 - “one million hikikomori” – Invented by publicity seeking shrink.
 - Incomplete
 - “X percent of Japanese women have suffered domestic violence” – Is that high, low, or typical of modern industrial societies?

Course Theme

- What you are NOT told is often more important than what you are told.
 - Japan is X. The Japanese are Y.
 - Yes, but what is X in the US? What is the American Y.
 - Yes, but what is the range of X in European? What is the range of Y among Europeans?
 - Is Japan high? Low? Average?

Course Themes

- Images of Japan are usually class images, not national images
 - The salaryman
 - Where are farmers, small businessmen?
 - Where are women?
 - Students studying for the “examination hell”
 - Where are all those who do not take examinations because they finish their education with high school?
 - Where are all those who go to colleges without an entrance examination 推薦入学 or a very easy entrance examination?

Course Themes

- Images of Japan are usually class images, not national images
 - Japanese women “who don’t get old or fat”
 - The title of a cookbook
 - Perhaps true of upper middle class society, women who work in Daikanyama 代官山 boutiques
 - Not true of lower middle class or working class women
 - Japanese women who are polite, refined, artistic
 - Yamanote 山の手 image projected on Japanese women at large

Overall Themes

- Be skeptical 懐疑的になる
 - If something sounds “unbelievable,” don’t believe it
 - If something is said to be “uniquely Japanese,” say, “Prove it!” Ask, “What other countries have you examined in detail?”
 - If something sounds “too good to be true,” it probably isn’t.

Overall Themes

- There is probably more rubbish written about Japan by foreigners **and by Japanese** than is true for any other country.
- Much of the foreign writing about Japan is “racist” in that it states explicitly or implicitly that Japan or the Japanese lack the virtues or culture that the writer believes his own ethnic or national group hold

Overall Goals

- Convey mainstream Anglo-American press images of Japan
- Debunk (主張・思想などが誤りを暴く) false claims and images of Japan put forward by both foreign and Japanese writers
- Give students the knowledge and techniques necessary to judge whether something reported about Japan is probably accurate or probably inaccurate and distorted or even totally without factual basis

Japan in the Foreign Imagination

[Earl H. Kinmonth](#)

Friday 2nd Period

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Revised 2015-09-26

Announcements

The first meeting of this course is Friday 2 October 2015.

Course Work

To be discussed in lecture.

Reference Materials

[Student Survey](#) This is optional. It is intended to give the instructor some sense of the students who are taking this course.

[Course Introduction](#). Slides from lecture introducing the course.

[Link to the syllabus](#) (course outline) on the Saitama University web site. [PDF version](#) of the syllabus.

Handouts and Readings [Primary Archive](#) [Alternate Archive](#)

The primary archive is available 365x24 but can be slow to load. The alternate archive is used for testing and is generally off line from 0130 to 0600..

Most handouts and readings used in this course are shared with a course offered by the instructor at Keio University. As a consequence, some readings and handouts may contain references to Keio that are not relevant to this course.

Mail to the Instructor

Use the address ehkuso@gmail.com. Mail can be either in English or Japanese. 日本語も使用可能. Make the subject line "Saitama Images" Your Name Student Number.

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That's All Folks!

Slides and readings:

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

<http://ehk.servebeer.com/saitama/images>

Email:

ehkuso@gmail.com Always include your name, student number and the title of the course (“Images”). You may use Japanese if you wish. 日本語も使用可能

Office Hour:

None at Saitama University.

Feel free to raise questions after class.

日本語も使用可能