Japan in Today’s World Program, Semester 1, Fall 2017-Winter 2018

Adjusting to Japan—Course Syllabus

Class meets: Tuesdays, Period 5, 4:40-6:10 p.m., 1405 Center Zone 1, Ito Campus
Instructor: Jordan Pollack, Professor, International Student Center
Office: D-402 West Zone 1, Ito Campus
Office hours: Mondays, 3:30-5:00 p.m., or by appointment
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Course Overview and Goal
This orientational course, intended for students with little or no prior experience in Japan, introduces important requirements for effective, appropriate functioning in everyday contexts. Lectures, group discussions, readings, and observation exercises will develop your awareness of understandings, attitudes, and communicative skills needed for intercultural competence. The objective is to equip you with insights, strategies, and tactics for successful interaction.

Procedure, Requirements, and Evaluation
Each class meeting will consist of several segments: 1) introduction of new reading and observation assignments for the coming week; 2) small group discussion of readings distributed in class the previous week followed by general class consideration of reading topics and themes; and 3) discussion of the results of small group observation work undertaken the week before. I will ask questions to provoke and guide those discussions as may be needed, and offer brief lectures as well as supplementary comments when appropriate.

Your final course grade will depend on your effort in five areas: reflecting, in writing and in class discussion, on three readings; reporting on three observation tasks, in writing and in class discussion; completing a group research project and presentation; writing a mentoring letter to future JTW students; and participating regularly and actively in class discussions otherwise. More specifically…

1) You are required to consider and write about (350 words will do) at least three cultural readings (to be handed out in class one week before they are to be discussed), each of which presents one or more adjustment insights. React to (i.e., describe, explain, evaluate, and/or compare, etc.) the norm(s) or practice(s) introduced. Reflections must be emailed to me for review by no later than noon of the Monday preceding scheduled class discussion, using pollackj@gmail.com. Come prepared to discuss your reactions in class, especially when you have turned in a reflection.

2) You are required, at least three times during the semester (you decide when), and together with one other student (preferably of a different nationality) from the class, carefully to observe an assigned aspect of everyday life in Japan, and then
to write up what you have noticed and your reactions (350 words is sufficient), emailing your joint remarks to pollackj@gmail.com by midday, 12:00 noon, on the Monday before the class when we consider the observation topic. I will suggest observation strategies at the time of topic assignment, and you will be asked to share your findings in class.

3) You are required to undertake a group-based, adjustment-related research project, on a topic to be developed by the group, and to present jointly to the class what you have learned. The objective is to identify and clarify aspects of life in Japan that sojourners will find useful and interesting to know.

4) You are required by the end of the semester to write (750 words or so will suffice) and submit a letter addressed to future, incoming JTW students, in which you offer advice and suggestions intended to help them adjust to local conditions and exploit opportunities, ensuring a productive, rewarding experience.

5) You are required to participate actively and regularly in discussion of the reading reflections and observation reports of others. This requirement presupposes another—that you attend all or most classes.

Pedagogical note: I regard verbal participation in class as an essential aspect of effective learning. Studies show that people understand and remember far more of what they are asked to make clear to others, as through presentations and sustained conversation, than what they simply read, hear, or see—hence the emphases above. Formulating alternative ways to express ideas, for the purpose of helping others to grasp them, is the best way, it turns out, to strengthen your own command of those ideas.

The reading reflections will comprise 30% of your final grade; observation reports, 30%; the group research and presentation, 15%; the mentoring letter, 10%; and your overall discussion participation, 15%. Evaluation of course performance will take into account differences between students in English proficiency. Very generally, I am looking for evidence, as exhibited in your class comments and writing, that you have taken seriously the various assignments and have given them careful and sustained attention.

Note: It is possible to earn a third credit for this course by doing additional work, which would involve writing several additional, extended reflections on topics to be assigned later in the term and to be handed in on the last day of class, January 30.

Course Readings

Course readings will include, but are not limited to:


JTW--Adjusting to Japan (cont'd.)


Schedule of Topics for Consideration and Discussion

The topics listed below, along with others too numerous to mention, are to be discussed on the day of class as indicated. Relevant readings and observational assignments will be provided one week before the scheduled discussion date.

October 10 Course introduction, safety, adjustment strategies, intercultural (communicative) competence, legal ages
## JTW--Adjusting to Japan (cont'd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 17</td>
<td>Food: cuisine (ryōri), implements (ohashi), dining, shopping</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24</td>
<td>Dress: Western and Japanese (wafuku-yōfuku), kimono, Harajuku and Cool Biz styles, uniforms</td>
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<td>October 31</td>
<td>Social place (uchi-soto), privacy (omote-ura), wrapping, personal space (hedataru-najimu), private/public (honne-tatemae)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 7, 14</td>
<td>Seasonality (kisetsu), monochronic and polychronic time, intervals (ma), ritual calendar (matsuri), high/low context cultures</td>
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<td>November 21</td>
<td>Formalism (do), bowing (ojigi), business card (meishi) exchange, home-visiting etiquette (washitsu, yōshitsu); seating, eating, and drinking manners, gestures, formalities (aisatsu)</td>
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<td>November 28</td>
<td>Group consciousness (shudan ishiki), harmony (wa), empathy (omoiyari), human feelings or consideration (ninjō), obligations (giri), reciprocity (go-on), gift-exchange (zōtō, omiyage)</td>
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<td>December 5</td>
<td>Loyalty and honor (bushido), verticality, seniority (sempai-kohai), ranking (kata-gaki), paternalism (onjo-shugi), dependence (amae), sincerity (makoto)</td>
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<td>December 12</td>
<td>Attitude (kokorogamae), patience, determination (gambari), endurance (gaman), dissatisfaction (ki ga sumanai), complaining, criticism, culture shock</td>
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<td>December 19</td>
<td>Modesty (kenkyo), politeness, apology (shazai), honorific language (keigo), shame (haji), compliance (sunao)</td>
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<td>December 26</td>
<td>No class, winter break</td>
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<td>January 2</td>
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<td>January 9</td>
<td>Silence (chinmoku), belly art (haragei), restraint (enryo-sasshi) composure, suppression of self (jibun na i), ambiguity (aimai), responsiveness (aizuchi)</td>
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<td>January 16</td>
<td>Introductions (shokaijo), go-betweens (chukai-sha), guarantors (hoshonin), laying groundwork (nemawashi), verbal agreements (yakusoku), trust (shinyo)</td>
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<td>January 23</td>
<td>Simplicity/elegance (wabi-sabi), sensitivity to nature (mono no aware), right mindfulness (shōnen)</td>
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<td>January 30</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
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