

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

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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:

Bestor, Theodore C. 2011. "Cuisine and Identity in Contemporary Japan," in Victoria Lyon Bestor and Theodore C. Bestor, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Society and Culture*. London: Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group).

Davies, Roger J. and Osamu Ikeda. 2002. Selections from *The Japanese Mind—Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture*. Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing.

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- Hall, Edward T. and Mildred Hall. 1987. "Time," in *Hidden Differences: Doing Business with the Japanese*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Hendry, Joy. 1996. "Temporal Wrapping—and Unwrapping" and "The Wrapping of Space," in *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation, and Power in Japan and Other Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kumakura, Isao. 2007. "The Culture of Ma" (Keys to the Japanese Mind), in *Japan Echo*, February, 56-60.
- Kuwayama, Takami. 2011. "Japan's Emic Conceptions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leeds-Hurwitz, Wendy. 1993. "Food as Sign and Code" and "Clothing as Sign and Code," in *Semiotics and Communication: Signs, Codes, Cultures*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Maynard, Senko K. 1997. "Politeness," in *Japanese Communication: Language in Thought and Context*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Makino Seiichi. 2002. "Uchi and Soto as Cultural and Linguistic Metaphors," in Ray T. Donahue, ed. *Exploring Japaneseness: On Japanese Enactments of Culture and Consciousness*. Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing.
- McVeigh, Brian J. 2002. "Aisatsu: Ritualized Politeness as Sociopolitical and Economic Management in Japan," in Ray T. Donahue, ed. *Exploring Japaneseness: On Japanese Enactments of Culture and Consciousness*. Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing.
- Mizutani Masahiko, James Dorsey, and James H. Moor. 2004. "The Internet and Japanese Conception of Privacy," in *Ethics and Information Technology*, Vol. 6, 121-128.
- Sperber, Dan. 1995. "How Do We Communicate?" in John Brockman and Katinka Matson, eds. *How Things Are: A Science Toolkit for the Mind*. New York: Morrow.
- Sugimoto, Naomi. 2002. "Japaneseness Manifested in Apology Styles," in Ray T. Donahue, ed. *Exploring Japaneseness*. Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing.
- Waswo, Ann. 2011. "Housing Culture," in Yoshio Sugimoto, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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