

# CONTEMPORARY Japanese Society



## A Sociological Introduction

With Language Table in English @ SALC

### I. COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Name:	Contemporary Japanese Society: A Sociological Introduction
Semester & Year:	Fall-Winter 2019-2020
Credits Earned:	2 Credits*
Prerequisite:	None
Class Meeting Place:	JTW Special Classroom, Center Zone 5 (Ito Campus)
Class Meeting Time:	Thursday, Period 2 (10:30—12:00)

\*Only JTW students (those formally enrolled in the JTW program fulltime) may pursue 3 credits out of this course if agreeing to complete additional work. If seeking 3 credits, students are required to successfully complete 4 sets of review essay assignments over the course of the semester (3 sets of assignments for those seeking 2 credits). See Pages 3-4 for more detailed information.

### II. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Instructor Name:	Professor Masa HIGO, Ph.D. (Sociology), Kyushu University International Student Center
Office Location:	Office 5715, Center Zone 5 (7F) (Ito Campus)
Office Hours:	By appointment
Office Phone:	092-802-4380
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### III. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course overviews daily social lives of people in contemporary Japanese society. Main subjects covered in this course include, but are not limited to, individuals' experiences of and perspectives on social stratification (class and inequalities), gender issues, race and ethnic relations, young-old social relations, education, popular culture, sports, and the family. The main goal of this course is to introduce to students contemporary Japanese society and culture from a sociological perspective, which focuses on how broad social structures and institutions shape and reshape individuals' perceptions and behaviors both in the course of their daily lives and over the whole of their lifetimes.

To achieve the course goals described above, students in this course are required to regularly participate in Language Table in English, a weekly student-centered activity. See below:

#### What Is 'Language Table in English'? –

'Language Table in English' is a weekly student-centered activity, which is scheduled to be held twelve times over the course of the semester, **beginning in October 10 (WEEK 2) and ending in January 30 (WEEK 15).** Each activity runs every Thursday from 12:10 PM to 12:50 PM – immediately following the weekly class meeting – **at The Self-Access Learning Center (SALC).** SALC is located on the 1st floor of the Center Zone 1 at Ito Campus. This activity aims to facilitate face-to-face interactions with local Japanese students

at Kyushu University using English as a medium of communication. Typically, students participate in this activity while enjoying lunch that they buy at a convenience store on campus.

Through this activity, students in this course will engage in informal discussions with the Japanese participants based on a set of discussion questions prepared by the instructor. This way students will gain knowledge of the way in which the Japanese participants experience their daily social lives as related to some of the main course subjects. This course will help students obtain basic knowledge of Japanese social life today not only through standard lectures and reading materials but also from their regular, direct interactions with Japanese students.

#### **IV. LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

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Upon completion of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following three sets of learning objectives:

##### **(1) UNDERSTAND main characteristics of contemporary Japanese society and culture:**

Students will be familiar with:

- Various individuals' daily experiences of some selected areas of social life in contemporary Japan; and
- Various individuals' perspectives on, opinions of, and attitudes towards some selected areas of social life in contemporary Japan.

##### **(2) ACQUIRE knowledge of basic structural characteristics of contemporary Japanese society:**

Students will be familiar with:

- Main social structures and institutions that shape individuals' daily social lives in contemporary Japan; and
- Major trends and shifts in social structures and institutions that reshape individuals' daily social lives in contemporary Japan.

##### **(3) GAIN comprehensive understanding of the uniqueness of contemporary Japanese society and culture:**

Students will be familiar with:

- Main characteristics of contemporary Japanese society as experienced by individuals in their daily social lives; and
- In what ways Japanese society and culture are different from and similar to students' home countries in terms of individuals' experiences of daily social life.

#### **V. COURSE MATERIALS:**

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In order to achieve the three sets of learning objectives listed above, this course provides students with the following two sets of materials:

##### **(1) LECTURES WITH POWERPOINT SLIDES:**

The primary learning material for this course is a set of standard lectures. Each lecture is delivered with a set of PowerPoint presentation slides that will be projected in the classroom.

- Over the course of this semester, students are required to take notes on all major information delivered in PowerPoint lecture slides in each class.
- The note-taking practice not only effectively facilitates students' meaningful understanding of class subjects but is also essential for successfully completing each Review Essay Assignment, one of the main course requirements as explained below.

## (2) REQUIRED READING MATERIALS:

For this course, students are not required to purchase any textbooks. Instead, the instructor has carefully selected 16-18 articles (a combination of online articles, blogs, published scholarly research articles, and newspaper articles) as the reading materials that students are required to read over the course of the semester.

- Every week, the instructor will hand out in class one article or two that is relevant to the main subject(s) for next class.
- Students are required to complete reading each article before coming in each class meeting.

## VI. TEXTBOOK:

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Refer to V. COURSE MATERIALS (above). This course does not require that students purchase any textbooks. Instead, students are required to receive and read 16-18 articles that the instructor will provide in class as scheduled in the course syllabus.

## VII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

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This course requires that each student complete all of the following three sets of activities:

### (1) CLASS ATTENDANCE:

Over the course of this semester, this course will have 15 class meetings and 14 Language Table in English sessions, all of which each student is required to attend.

- Each student will earn 5 points for each class attendance; over the course of the semester a student may earn up to 75 points towards his or her grade in the course.
- Class attendance will comprise 25% of the final course grade.

### (2) CLASS PARTICIPATION:

This course requires that each student not only attend all the class meetings but also actively participate in all class activities and discussions.

- Each student may earn up to 75 points for his or her excellent class participation throughout the semester.
- At the end of the semester the instructor will assess and grade the level of each student's overall class participation based on the following criteria: *very active* = 75; *active* = 55; *moderately active* = 45; *mostly inactive* = 25; and *completely inactive* = 0.
- Class participation will comprise 25% of the final course grade.

### (3) REVIEW ESSAY (X 3):

Over the course of this semester, students are required to complete three Review Essays.

- Each Review Essay will be assigned as a homework/take-home assignment (as opposed to an exam or test during a class meeting).
- Each Review Essay assignment will consist of 3-4 short essay questions, which ask students to demonstrate and exercise the basic knowledge that they are expected to gain regarding the subjects from lectures, the relevant reading materials, in-class discussions, and participations in the Language Table in English activities.
- The instructor will email students each Review Essay a week before the due date (as scheduled in this course syllabus).

- | Students are required to type their essays (NOT handwrite them) and to submit them in an electronic copy (via email). It is also required that students save electronic copies of all essays in case the instructor accidentally misplaces them.
- | Each Review Essay is worth 50 points. By completing all 3 essays, a student may earn 150 points at maximum.
- | Review Essays (X 3) will comprise 50% of the final course grade.

**If you pursue 3 credits out of this course:**

- ▶ You are required to successfully complete and turn in **a total of 4 Review Essays**, one additional Review Essay on top of the three required for all students.
- ▶ The additional Review Essay will require the students select two subjects covered in class over the course of the semester and discuss how contemporary Japanese society are different from, and similar to, their home countries in terms of these two subjects. This additional Review Essay is expected to be written in double space and between 1000-1200 words.
- ▶ This additional Review Essay is expected to be written in double space and between 1000-1200 words.
- ▶ The students are then required to turn in the additional Review Essay by the same due date set for the third Review Essay (See Page 6).

**VIII. GRADING SYSTEM & POLICIES:**

As outlined above, each student earns points by completing the following activities:

1.	Class Attendance:	5 points each	x	15 times	=	75 points max
2.	Class Participation:	75 points	x	Overall	=	75 points max
3.	Review Essay:	50 points each	x	3 times	=	150 points max
					Total:	300 points max

Grading standards in this course are as follows:

Points in total	In percentage	Significance	Letter Grade
300 – 270 points	= 90 – 100%	= Excellent	→ A
269 – 240 points	= 80 – 89%	= Good	→ B
239 – 210 points	= 70 – 79%	= Satisfactory	→ C
209 – 180 points	= 60 – 69%	= Pass	→ D
0 – 179 points	= 0 – 59%	= Fail	→ F

**IX. EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS:**

Each student is responsible for:

- | Being well prepared for each class by closely reading beforehand all the assigned articles specified in the syllabus.
- | Being aware of all dates, deadlines, and assignments and taking their own responsibility to adhere to them.
- | Refraining from personal chatting and use of cellular phones (including Blackberry, iPhone, and the like) during class.
- | Contributing to the collective learning experience by not disrupting the classroom in any way – what you do affects other students and you have an obligation to act in a manner conducive to learning.

- | Actively engaging in class discussion. Engaging in class discussion includes responding to my questions, asking me questions, and responding to other students' comments. It also means listening while others are talking.
- | Respecting the diversity of the classroom composition – there will be differences of opinions, of language, of values, of appearance, and/or discussion styles. You have a right to speak your mind, and an obligation to listen to others.
- | Practicing academic integrity – academic dishonesty includes cheating on exams, stealing copies of exams, copying someone else's work and calling it your own, making up citations, plagiarism, etc. Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own, for example, copying a chunk of text from a website and pasting it, uncited, into your Review Essay. You are expected to complete assignments in your own words (although, of course, you may have someone else proofread your writing to help you find errors in your spelling, grammar, the logic of your arguments, etc.): Plagiarism is prohibited.

## X. CLASS, TOPIC & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

**Note:** Topics and due dates are tentative and will remain subject to change.

WEEK 1: Oct. 3 (Thu) *Welcome to Contemporary Japanese Society– Course Introduction*

### SECTION 1: THE ROLE OF MAIN SOCIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN JAPANESE SOCIAL LIFE TODAY

WEEK 2: Oct. 10 (Thu) *Age & Seniority – Younger-Older Social Relation in Contemporary Japan*

WEEK 3: Oct. 17 (Thu) *Sex & Gender – Gender Inequalities & Gender Roles in Japan Today*

WEEK 4: Oct. 31 (Thu) *Race & Ethnicity – Social Construction of a “Homogeneous” Japan*

WEEK 5: Nov. 7 (Thu) *Social Class – Socio-Economic Inequalities in Japan Today*  
 Homework Assignment: [Review Essay #1 \(Due Next Class – WEEK 6: Nov. 14\)](#)

### SECTION 2: JAPANESE DAILY LIFE TODAY UNDER CHANGING MAJOR SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

WEEK 6: Nov. 14 (Thu) *Intimate Relationships – Transforming Love & Intimacy in Japan Today*

WEEK 7: Nov. 21 (Thu) *Family Life – Shifting Family Relations in an Era of Declining Childbirth*

WEEK 8: Nov. 28 (Thu) *Education & School – Changing Education Systems in Japan Today*

WEEK 9: Dec. 5 (Thu) *Bullying – A Major Challenge in Japanese School Life Today*

WEEK 10: Dec. 12 (Thu) *Work & Career – Entering the World of Lifetime Employment in Japan*  
 Homework Assignment: [Review Essay #2 \(Due Next Class – WEEK 11: Dec. 19\)](#)

### SECTION 3: JAPANESE DAILY LIFE TODAY UNDER THE CHANGING CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

WEEK 11: Dec. 19 (Thu) *Pop-Culture – Anime, Manga, and Pop-Music in Japanese Social Life Today*

----- Winter Break (December 26, 2019 – January 5, 2020) -----

WEEK 12: Jan. 9 (Thu) *Sports in Society – The Role of Sport Activities in Japanese Social Life Today*

WEEK 13: Jan. 16 (Thu) *Faith & Religiosity – Beliefs and Spirituality in Japanese Social Life Today*

WEEK 14: Jan. 23 (Thu) *Social Networking – Friendships & Groupings in Japanese Social Life Today*

WEEK 15: Jan. 30 (Thu) *Wrapping Up – Reviewing Contemporary Japanese Society*  
Homework Assignment: [Review Essay #3 \(Due: Feb. 6, Thu\)](#)

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*End of Syllabus*