

Course Syllabus – Spring Semester 2017  
IAH 211B: Area Studies and Multicultural Civilizations: Asia

## **Japanese Culture and Society**

**Japan Center for Michigan Universities (JCMU)**

**Hikone, Shiga Prefecture, JAPAN: *In accordance with Michigan State University policy***

**4 Credits: Lectures (30 hours) + Field Work: Total 60 hours**

**Instructor: Benjamin J. McCracken**

Mondays 1:00- 3:30 P.M.

Office Hours: By appointment: Please email me.

E-mail: [bmccracken@jcmu.org](mailto:bmccracken@jcmu.org)

### **Goals of Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities (IAH)**

Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities at MSU seeks to assist students to become more familiar with ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and to be more knowledgeable and capable in a range of intellectual and expressive abilities. IAH courses encourage students to engage critically with their own society, history, and culture(s); they also encourage students to learn more about the history and culture of other societies. They focus on key ideas and issues in human experience; encourage appreciation of the roles of knowledge and values in shaping and understanding human behavior; emphasize the responsibilities and opportunities of democratic citizenship; highlight the value of the creative arts and literature, theater, music, and arts; and alert us to important issues that occur among peoples in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world.

### **Description of the Course**

This course focuses on the unique role Shiga Prefecture has had and continues to play in the evolution of Japanese culture and society. We will observe the evolution of Japanese society from a feudal culture to an economic superpower by examining its culture and history. Simultaneously, we will look at what is happening in the world as it pertains to and influences Japan. Finally, we will discuss contemporary Japan's economic and social conditions and connections.

Throughout the course, we will examine how urbanization, cultural diffusion, religion, and the arts influence the development of Japanese society. Through comparative analysis of the history and culture of Japan during its quest to be seen as equal to powerful Western nations, this course aims to raise students' consciousness about the dynamic and powerful relationship between cultural development and the human experience. Because the course is offered on-site in Japan, students will be able to incorporate first-hand observations of contemporary Japan into their writing assignments and class discussions.

## **Instructional Objectives**

1. To learn more about and be able to compare one's own cultural and historical conditions through comparative inquiries of Japan;
2. To recognize culture and history as properties that are conditioned by our own way of thinking;
3. To gain skills to facilitate inquiry into globalization and its impacts from multiple and diverse cultural, intellectual and sociological perspectives.

## **Course Requirements, Assignments and Evaluations**

**Punctuality and Attendance:** Students are required to attend all lectures, field observations, and other scheduled events programmed for this course. Excessive tardiness to class and class activities may result in the dismissal of a student from the program.

**Absence Policy:** Your attendance is very important not only to you but also to other classmates. Due to the nature of Study Abroad, no unannounced absences will be permitted. Your tardiness may be counted as 1/2 unexcused absence. Excessive unexcused absences may result in dismissal.

**Preparation and Participation:** The student is expected to prepare for class by completing the reading assignments and preparing for selected discussion topics prior to attending class. Participation is a key element to your success in this course. Class discussion and interactivity with the class as a whole is critical to developing an awareness of the content described in lectures and readings. Participation constitutes 10% of your grade.

**Class Writing Assignments:** Students are required to demonstrate their knowledge of key concepts based on what they have learned during their Study Abroad program through a series of written assignments. The students will have flexibility in showing what they have learned. This will also allow the participants to reflect broadly about cultural experiences and cultural values and how these figure into major lessons learned. The following assignments are required for the successful completion of this course:

- Seven (7) writing assignments based on class content and fieldwork (1 page each, single spaced)
- One (1) paper on the importance of Shiga Prefecture in Japanese culture and society (5 pages)

**Presentations:** Students will be required to give a presentation on an area of the arts or humanities in Japan where they have special interest. Students will be given maximum flexibility to demonstrate what they have learned through field excursions and in class.

### **Academic Honesty and Classroom Etiquette**

Students must value academic honesty in their own work. In addition to other malpractices, plagiarism is considered among the most blatant forms of academic dishonesty. This means that a student will not submit any written work that has been copied from the internet or any other form of published media. Additionally a student will not submit any work that has been written by another person without citing that source and will never submit another's work as his/her own. This would also include unacknowledged paraphrasing. As specified by university policy, such academic dishonesty may result in a penalty grade for the course. For more information on academic dishonesty policy, please refer to the MSU Ombudsperson's webpage: <https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html>

### **Grading Criteria and Grading Scale**

Students will be graded on four distinct course elements:

- a) Writing assignments (40%)
- b) Presentation (30%)
- c) Attendance (20%)\*
- d) Participation (10%)\*\*

\* Attendance makes up 20% of the whole course grade. If a student excessively misses classes without advising the instructor, the student may be terminated from the course.

\*\* Participation means "active" participation. Simply being in the classroom is not the same as participating. Points for participation will be awarded only when students are actively engaging in activities, discussion, field exploration, and other learning activities for this course.

The conversion table between the 4.0 grading scale and point system is as follows:

4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	0.0
90-100	85-89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	59 ↓

### **Online SIRS Evaluation Policy**

Michigan State University (MSU) takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and has implemented the Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) to gather student feedback (<https://sirsonline.msu.edu>). This course utilizes the online SIRS system, and you will receive an e-mail during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS web form at your convenience. In addition, participation in the online SIRS system involves grade sequestration, which means that the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been completed. Alternatively, you have the option on the SIRS website to decline to participate in

the evaluation of the course. We hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your frank and constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future. If you access the online SIRS website and complete the online SIRS form or decline to participate, you will receive the final grade in this course as usual once final grades are submitted.

### **Class Schedule and Assignments**

Please note that the student is expected to have read and studied the assigned reading and prepared for discussions *prior* to each class. Be sure to bring to class the texts under discussion. Field work is counted as class time: you will be required to keep notes and write summaries in order to draft the one-page papers described below.

#### **Class 1: January 16: Intro: About Japan and Shiga.**

Summary of the history of Shiga Prefecture and Hikone City.

#### **Class 2: January 23: Feudal Japan (Lecture and field trip to Hikone Castle)**

Explore life of a lord during the Edo Period by visiting Hikone Castle, Rakuen garden, and the Hikone Castle Museum.

**Reading: Hikone: A Journey In Time (Manga)**

**Writing Assignment 1** (1 page single spaced) **Impressions of Hikone Castle**

#### **Class 3: January 30: From Feudal to Modern (Lecture and field trip to the Biwako Museum)**

Explore the life of ordinary people in Shiga by looking at life during the Edo, Meiji, and modern periods. Students will also gain a basic understanding of the importance of Lake Biwa in terms of its economic and environmental significance.

**Writing Assignment 2** (1 page single spaced) **Impressions of the Biwako Museum**

#### **Class 4: February 6: Introduction to modern Japanese politics (Lecture on the Japanese Constitution and political systems)**

Explore the change from feudal forms of government to Japan's modern government based on western models and ideas.

**Reading: Japanese Constitution**

#### **Class 5: February 13: Understanding modern politics (Lecture and fieldtrip to the Shiga Prefectural Government)**

Students will learn how the modern Japanese government works and see how it compares to government in the United States.

**Writing Assignment 3** (1 page single spaced) **Impressions of the Shiga Prefectural Government**

**Class 6: February 20:** Introduction to Japanese Arts (Lecture and fieldtrip or arts workshop TBD)

Students will gain an appreciation for Japanese arts and look at the development of famous forms of art such as tea ceremony, Noh theatre, Kabuki Theatre, etc.

***Writing Assignment 4*** (1 page single spaced) **Impressions of the Arts in Japan**

**Class 7: February 27:** Introduction to Japanese Religion (Lecture and fieldtrip to Religious sites)

Students will learn about Shintoism and Buddhism, the two most popular religions in Japan. Students will have a chance to visit significant religious sites for both religions located in Shiga.

***Writing Assignment 5*** (1 page single spaced) **Impressions of Japanese Religions**

**Class 8: March 6:** Introduction to Japanese business (Lecture and fieldtrip to Ohmihachiman the center of Ohmi merchant culture)

Students will explore how Japanese business has changed throughout the years by looking at the business mentality of the Ohmi Merchant business culture and how it is applied to Japanese life.

***Writing Assignment 6*** (1 page single spaced) **Impressions of Ohmihachman and Ohmi Merchants.**

**Class 9: March 13:** Modern Japanese business (Lecture and factory tour)

Students will learn about Japanese business and how it compares with business models in the United States. Students will gain an understanding of how Japan fits into the global economy.

***Writing Assignment 7*** (1 page single spaced) **Impressions of modern Japanese business**

**NO CLASS: March 20 – SPRING EQUINOX HOLIDAY** (Japanese National Holiday)

**Class 10: March 27:** Student fieldwork Project Day for presentation – Students will have this day to travel to the location they designate as the focus of their presentation.

**Class 11: April 3:** Student Presentations

**Class 12: April 10:** Student Presentations

**April 17:** Final Papers are due