

Japanese Culture and Society (4 credits)

**The Japan Center for Michigan Universities
Hikone, Shiga JAPAN**

Instructor: Benjamin J. McCracken, Esq.

Tuesday and Thursday (with one Saturday fieldtrip)

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Course Description

Model Japan Explanation

Students will be divided into different teams. Each team will represent a different region of Japan. Each team will be responsible for researching their region in order to understand its unique characteristics and view on current issues in Japan. Students will need to continually research their region to understand how current issues specifically impact their region.

Typically Japan is divided into eight regions. For purposes of this course Okinawa will be treated as a separate and distinct region.

1. Hokkaido
2. Tohoku
3. Kanto
4. Chubu
5. Kinki
6. Chugoku
7. Shikoku
8. Kyusyu
9. Okinawa

The first part of this course is designed to give students a basic understanding of Japan, its constitution and government. Students will then make a 50 to 60 minute presentation on their assigned region. Finally, students will represent their region in group discussions as part of a model Japanese assembly.

Students will be presented with an issue during the first class during a week (usually Tuesdays). There will be a one-hour lecture on the issue and then students will caucus for one-hour in their respective regional teams. During this time students will research the topic and decide how their respective region feels about the specific issue. Topics that directly impact a particular region will require out of class research.

At the beginning of the second class (usually Thursdays), students will make a short presentation (5 to 10 minutes) about how their region feels about this particular issue and discuss any measures their region has taken to address it. Sometimes a particular region will have a strong opinion. Other times a particular region may not have any opinion at all (this is rare). Students will then meet in different committees and will discuss the issue from their region's point of view. Students then return to their team to discuss how other regions feel about the issue. During the second hour students will

return to their committees to further discuss what they discussed during their team caucuses. Each committee will then present a proposed solution to the issue, or as the case may be, decided whether to accept or reject an international treaty or proposed law.

Japan Lab

For the first three class session students will be in a joint class with Japanese university students. Students will be provided with topics and questions in order to interview their peers so they can learn about Japanese culture directly from Japanese people. Students will also be asked to share about their own culture. Japan lab culminates in joint presentations comparing aspects of Japanese and American culture.

Instruction objectives include:

1. To learn more about and be able to compare one's own cultural and traditions through comparative inquiries of Japan and Japanese thoughts.
2. To recognize culture as something conditioned by our way of thinking.
3. To gain skills to facilitate inquiry into globalization and its impacts from the perspectives of others.

Course Requirements/ Assignments and Evaluations

- ◆ **Punctuality and Attendance:** Students are required to attend all lecture meetings, 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 a 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. Please refer Office of Study Abroad for further details (<http://studyabroad.msu.edu>). Your tardiness may be counted as 1/2 unexcused absence. Excessive unexcused absences may result in dismissal from the course.
- ◆ **Preparation and Participation:** 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 and issues presented. Students that are not prepared will be asked to leave the class and will be marked as absent. Participation constitutes 40% of your grade.

Students are evaluated on the following basis.

1.	<p>Completed preparation binder / portfolio Each team will be responsible for the creation of one portfolio or binder. This includes building a binder or portfolio of all research materials the students find which are relevant to the region they represent. This maybe done electronically.</p>	40%
2.	<p>Participation in class This includes both participation in class discussions while preparing for committee meetings and caucuses.</p>	40%
3.	<p>Support for your team This includes building team confidence, carrying our supportive tasks, working with other members of your region, sharing information on the region and topics, etc.</p>	10%
4.	<p>Reflection Paper This paper should evaluate your Model Japan and Japan Lab experience, including assessments of the preparation for and participation in class, your personal learning growth, and recommendations for the future.</p>	10%

Grade Breakdown

Conversion Table between 4.0 Scale and Points

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

Class Schedule and Assignments

Week 1 (9/3) Introduction to Model Japan and Japan lab

Week 2 (9/8 and 9/10) Japan Lab continued Presentations on cultural differences

Week 3 (9/15 and 9/17) Teams decided – Initial Research begins

Japan Lab – What did we learn?

Introduction to the Japanese Constitution and Politics

Readings: Handout on Japanese Politics and the Japanese Constitution

Week 4 (9/24) Introduction to the Japanese Constitution and Politics continued

Week 5 (9/29 and 10/1) Initial Region Presentations (50 to 60 minutes)

Field Trip: TBD

Week 6 (10/6 and 10/8) Initial Region Presentations Continued (50 to 60 minutes)

Week 7 (10/13 and 10/15) Issue 1 – Relocation of Futenma Airbase (There will be a guest facilitator on 10/13)

Readings: Handout on Futenma Airbase

Week 8 (10/20 and 10/23) Issue 2 – Revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution

Readings: Handout on proposed revisions to the Japanese Constitution

Week 9 (10/27 and 10/29) Issue 3 – TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement)

Readings: Handout on TPP

Week 10 (11/5) Guest Lecturer on US/Japan Relations

Week 11 (11/10 and 11/12) Issue 4 – Fukushima nuclear problem and nuclear reactor restart

Readings: Handout on Fukushima nuclear problem

Week 12 (11/17 and 11/19) Issue 5 – Rights for same-sex partners

Readings: Handout on LGBTQ issues in Japan

Week 13 (11/24 and 11/26) Issue 6 – Bullying in Japanese Schools

Readings: Handout on bullying

Week 14 (12/1 and 12/3) Issue 7 – Declining Birthrate

Readings: Handout on declining birth rate in Japan

Week 15 (12/8 and 12/11) Issue 8 – Zainichi Korean and Chinese

Readings: Handout on Zainichi Korean and Chinese issues

Week 16 (12/15) **Reflection Papers Due**