

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 field trip)

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Course Description

Model Japan Explanation

Students will be divided into different teams. Each team will represent a different prefecture of Japan. Students will also be given a committee assignment. Each student will also be assigned a political party affiliation. Each team will be responsible for researching their region in order to understand its unique characteristics and view on current issues in Japan. Students must continually research their prefectures to understand how current issues impact their region. Students will represent their prefectures in their committees and work towards achieving their region's goals. Students will also research their political parties.

Typically Japan is divided into eight regions and 47 prefectures.

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

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

Each committee will be presented with an issue. The committee will present on the issue. After the committee presentation, students will consider the proposal submitted by the committee. Students should do independent research on the issue and decide how their respective prefectures would like it resolved. 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. Groups should be prepared to offer counter-proposals to those submitted by the committee in charge of the issue. Sometimes a particular region will have a strong opinion. Other times a particular region may not have any opinion at all. Sometimes one's political party

affiliation will determine which side of an issue the student will support. After the issue and proposals are thoroughly discussed, students will vote on the various proposals.

Japan Lab

Students will interact 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 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. Six hours of unexcused absence will result in a failing grade for this course. Also, Japanese study during this class is strictly prohibited. If a student is caught studying Japanese during class time the student will receive a ½ unexcused absence.
- ◆ **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 30% of your grade.

Students are evaluated on the following basis.

1.	<p>Completed preparation binder / portfolio</p> <p>Each student 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 prefecture they represent and the issues they are researching. This maybe done electronically.</p>	30%
2.	<p>Participation in class</p> <p>This includes both participation in class discussions while preparing for committee meetings and caucuses.</p> <p>20% will be based on daily participation. The reaming 20% will be for your group presentations.</p>	30%
3.	<p>Support for your team</p> <p>This includes building team confidence, carrying our supportive tasks, working with other members of your prefecture, sharing information on the region and topics, etc.</p>	10%
4.	<p>Reflection Paper</p> <p>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>	30%

Grade Breakdown

Conversion Table between 4.0 Scale and Points

4.0 point	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 & below

Class Schedule and Assignments

Week 1 Introduction to Model Japan and Japan lab

Week 2 Introduction to the Japanese Constitution and Politics

Week 3 Prefectures, committees, and political parties decided. Issues distributed to committees – Research begins

Week 4 Caucus time – Students should meet with their prefectures, committees, and political parties to research and prepare for presentations

Week 5 Prefecture presentations (Time allowed will depend on the number of regions represented)

Field Trip: JCMU Center-wide Field Trip

Week 6 Japan Lab

Week 7 Japan Lab

OPTIONAL CLASS – (2/23) Japan Lab

Week 8 Japan Lab

Week 9 Issue 1 – Revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (Committee presentation and Discussion)

Week 10 Issue 2 – Declining Birthrate (Committee Presentation and Discussion)

Week 11 Issue 3 – US Military in Japan (Committee Presentation and Discussion)

Week 12 Issue 4 – Nuclear Reactor Restarts and Environmental Issues (Committee Presentation and Discussion)

Week 13 Issue 5 – Gender (Committee Presentation and Discussion)

Week 14 Conclusion - Binders and Reflection papers due