Summary
This introductory course is an inquiry into the culture of Japan - its thought and way of life - that is designed to foster future study of the archipelago. It elucidates the specificities of a Japanese identity that is imbued with both tradition and openness to innovation.

Content
Culture and thought as mirrored in cinema and anime

Specifics in four parts

Do – The Way
Keys of understanding: Japanese society after the opening of Japan to the West at the end of the 19th century.
Spirituality and martial arts: Akira Kurosawa's film *Judo Saga (Sanshiro Sugata)* 1943
Introduction to Zen: traditional as in Japanese temples and in a contemporary global context.

Professional and private life
Several reflections on the lives of women and men from the postwar period to the present day
Examples of arranged marriage Yasujiro Ozu’s film *Banshun (Late Spring)* 1949
Communication through a third party

First examination: written answer to one thematic among five

Cool Japan – Aging Japan: innovation and ethics
Anime and science fiction: Osamu Tezuka
From Hiroshima to Fukushima: questioning ethics in a nuclear context
Visualizing dreams: Satoshi Kon’s anime *Paprika* 2006

Contemporary Japan
From technological visions to reality: “Soul” in Japanese robotics, by Raphaël Holzer
Nature – nurture – Shinto as a social reinvigorator: Naomi Kawase’s film *An (Sweet bean)* 2016

Synthesis

Second examination: research plan for the spring semester (individual or as a group)

Keywords
Interculturality, Do, Shinto, Zen, arts, communication, robotics, food, nurture, innovation, ethics, cinema, anime

POLY-perspective:
• interdisciplinary perspective
• creative perspective

https://www.epfl.ch/schools/cdh/cdhs-vision/
Learning Prerequisites

Recommended courses
- Japon Contemporain A BA5
- Histoire de l'Asie contemporaine A BA3
- Histoire de l'Asie contemporaine B BA6
- Chine Contemporaine BA4
- Economie de la Chine BA5
- Chine: une nouvelle puissance globale? BA6
- Introduction au monde russe BA6

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:
- Develop a critical methodology for studying ethnocentric thinking
- Interpret cultural stereotypes attached to Japan (spirituality, gender, arts)
- Develop an intellectual argument on a proposition relevant to the course
- Synthesize the array of knowledge necessary to have a good understanding of social integration in Japan
- Synthesize the contributions of contemporary Japan (innovation, work ethics, spirituality, robotics, arts, architecture, gardens, food)
- Compose or write a paper
- Use a work methodology appropriate to the task

Transversal skills

- Communicate effectively with professionals from other disciplines.
- Communicate effectively, being understood, including across different languages and cultures.
- Take account of the social and human dimensions of the engineering profession.
- Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking

Teaching methods

Fall semester: lecture and visiting speakers + supervision (English/French) of the elaboration of a research plan
Spring semester: supervision of research, mini-colloquium, a paper sample will be furnished to students

Expected student activities

Elaboration of an individual or group research plan, active participation, critical lecture of articles and books, working discipline and time management, writing skills
- Fall semester: written examination, research plan (two pages: title, issue, detailed plan, bibliography)
- Spring semester: abstract (250 words), participation to a mini-colloquium, paper (4000 words)

Assessment methods

Fall semester: written examination (50%), quality of the research plan (50%)
Spring semester: oral presentation at the mini-colloquium (50%), paper (50%)

Supervision

- Office hours: Yes
- Assistants: Yes
- Forum: No

Resources
Bibliography
Bibliography will be furnished (see below), plus specialized resources on the moodle
• Mariko Walter, Jacqueline I. Stone *Death and the afterlife in Japanese Buddhism* Hawai'i Press 2016
• Akira Nakamura, Ronald J. Hrebenar *Party Politics in Japan* Routledge 2015
• Ayako Kano *Japanese Feminist Debates* Hawai'i Press 2016
• Kenzaburo Ōé *Teach us to outgrow our madness: four short novels* Grove Atlantic 2011

Ressources en bibliothèque
• Yoshiko Okuyama *Japanese mythology in film*
• Mariko Walter, Jacqueline I. Stone *Death and the afterlife in Japanese Buddhism*
• Akira Nakamura, Ronald J. Hrebenar *Party Politics in Japan*
• Ayako Kano *Japanese Feminist Debates*
• Kenzaburo Ōé *Teach us to outgrow our madness*