

HUM-444

**Contemporary Japan I**

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Cursus	Sem.	Type
Humanities and Social Sciences	MA1	Obl.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	3
Session	Winter
Semester	Fall
Exam	During the semester
Workload	90h
Weeks	14
<b>Hours</b>	<b>3 weekly</b>
Lecture	2 weekly
Project	1 weekly
<b>Number of positions</b>	<b>50</b>

**Remark**

Une seule inscription à un cours SHS+MGT autorisée. En cas d'inscriptions multiples elles seront toutes supprimées sans notification.

**Summary**

Introduction into the culture of Japan - its thought and way of life - designed to foster future study of the archipelago. We elucidate the specificities of a Japanese identity that is imbued with both tradition and openness to innovation, to create sustainability - society, economy, environment.

**Content**

Culture and thought for sustainability 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**

Animé and science fiction: Osamu Tezuka

From Hiroshima to Fukushima: questioning ethics in a nuclear context

Visualizing dreams: Satoshi Kon's animé *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**

Sustainability, 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

**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**

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

**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 a group research plan, active participation, critical lecture of articles and books, working discipline and time management, writing skills

- Fall semester: individual 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

Yoshio Sugimoto *An introduction to Japanese Society* Cambridge Press 2021

Ayako Kano *Japanese Feminist Debates* Hawaiï Press 2016

Yoshiko Okuyama *Japanese mythology in film: a semiotic approach to reading film and anime* Lexington Books 2016

Satoshi Kon *Dream Fossil: The complete stories of Satoshi Kon* Vertical Comics Edition 2015

Kenzaburo Ôé *Teach us to outgrow our madness: four short novels* Grove Atlantic 2011

John W. Dover *Embracing defeat Japan in the wake of World War II* WW Norton & Company 1999

### Ressources en bibliothèque

- [Yoshiko Okuyama Japanese mythology in film](#)
- [Satoshi Kon Dream Fossil](#)
- [Yoshio Sugimoto An introduction to Japanese Society](#)
- [Ayako Kano Japanese Feminist Debates](#)
- [Kenzaburo Ôé Teach us to outgrow our madness](#)

### Moodle Link

- <https://go.epfl.ch/HUM-444>