

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
Hours	3 weekly
Courses	2 weekly
Project	1 weekly
Number of positions	60

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**

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 speaker + 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
Assistant.e.s	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

- [Find the references at the Library](#)

Moodle Link

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