Course Objectives

This course has two main aims. First it is an introductory course on Japanese society with a particular focus on understanding social institutions and social issues within contemporary Japanese society. Second, you will learn how to analyse the everyday through engagement with texts on Japanese society.

Timetable

There will be one 90-minute class per week combining both lecture and discussion.

Evaluation

Evaluation consists of weekly readings, classroom participation, and a final exam.

1. Discussion Questions: 15%

Classroom participation is assessed primarily through the discussion segment of the class. All students are required to read the weekly ‘required reading’ and send me at least one open-ended discussion question by 5p.m. the day before class to cook@oia.hokudai.ac.jp

The question should aim to promote discussion with your classmates relating to the topic of the class that week. If it is a question that you could easily get the answer to, you will not get credit for it. So, if you could Google your question and get the answer then it is not a discussion question. I am looking for comments and questions that reflect your thoughts and critiques that came up as you were reading the texts, which we can then discuss as a class. One or two of the questions will be chosen for discussion in class. Please note that you will not get individual feedback on each discussion question you send in.

A note on required readings:
All the required readings are available for download from the class information page on my website at: http://emma-e-cook.net/undergraduate-teaching/introduction-to-japanese-society/
The PDF readings are password protected. To access the readings the password is: introjapan

2. Weekly Reflection Comments: 15%

Students are required to write short reflection comments at the end of each class that critically consider the topics we have discussed in class.

3. Exam: 70%

There will be an in-class 90-minute exam in Week 15. Exam questions will be given two weeks in advance.
Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to the course

No Reading Due

Week 2: ‘Uniqueness’ – Nihonjinron debates

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


Recommended Reading:


**Week 3: Class and Stratification**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 4: Education**

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 5: Employment: Post-bubble and beyond**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


Week 6: Gender and Family

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Week 7: Welfare and Poverty

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Iwata, Masami. 2010. ‘New landscape of homelessness in Japan: The role of NPOs and landscape of the problem.’ City, Culture and Society 2010. vol 1. 127-134


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**Week 8: Disability**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


Gottlieb, Nanette. 2001. ‘Language and Disability in Japan’ *Disability & Society*. 16(7): 981-995


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**Week 9: Minorities, Ethnicity, Status**

**Required Reading:**

Recommended Reading:


McLelland, Mark, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker (eds.). 2007. Queer Voices from Japan: First Person Narratives from Japan’s Sexual Minorities. Lexington Books


Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Vogt, Gabriele. 2007. “‘Guest Workers’ for Japan? Demographic Change and Labor Migration to Japan,” *Japan Focus*, September 15th 2007
Week 11: Crime and Deviance

**Required Reading:**


**Additional Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


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**Week 12: Social Movements and Protest**
**Required Reading:**

1. Mori, Yoshitaka. 2005. ‘Culture = Politics: The Emergence of New Cultural Forms of Protest in the Age of Freeter’ *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 6, Number 1, 2005

**Recommended Reading:**


Cassegård, Carl. 2013. *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan*. Brill. Any/All chapters (if you can find it – not yet in the library)


Week 13: Environmental Issues and Natural Disasters

Required Reading:


2. Steger, Brigitte. 2012. ‘“We were all in this together”. Challenges To and Practices of Cleanliness in Tsunami Evacuation Shelters in Yamada, Iwate Prefecture, 2011’, Japan Focus, 17 September. Available online at: http://www.japanfocus.org/-Brigitte-Steger/3833

Recommended Reading:


George, Timothy. 2002. Minamata: Pollution and the Struggle for Democracy in Postwar Japan. Harvard University Asia Center


Samuels, Richard. J. 2013. 3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan. Cornell University Press


Week 14: Exam Preparation Week

Week 15: Exam