



Kobe Summer School 2014

UG - 4

July 28 -- August 6, 2014

Introduction to Japanese Culture and Society



Hillary PEDERSEN
Lecturer of Japanese Studies,
Ritsumeikan University

1. July 28 (4th Period):

Buddhist Images in Japanese Culture and Society

While many Japanese Buddhist monuments are now popular tourist destinations, the original contexts of their production had wide-reaching effects upon many spheres of Japanese society. Aside from religious meaning, Buddhist image production had profound influence upon the Japanese economy, politics, and foreign relations. This lecture will begin with a discussion of key Buddhist concepts and related visual expressions in Japan. I will explore both distinctive native characteristics as well as the role of Japan in an international network of Buddhist image production.



Kiyomitsu YUI
Professor of Sociology, Kobe
University

2. July 29 (4th Period):

Japanese Sub-culture and Globalization

The lecture will focus on Japanese sub-culture as a global phenomenon in the age of decentered globalization. In its phase of "traveling," this lecture will take up examples of Japanese sub-culture such as costume play and comic market events in conjunction with contemporary cultural industries in Japan.



Nobuo KAZASHI
Professor of Philosophy, Kobe
University

3. July 30 (4th Period):

Japan's Dilemma over the Nuclear: A Historical Overview

The atomic bombing marks a decisive turn in modern Japan, but its significance has not been univocal. It has become a cornerstone for Japan's post-war pacifism. However, it has been doubly twisted by the fact that Japan has chosen, not only to be under the U.S.'s nuclear umbrella, but also to promote nuclear power generation in the name of "peaceful use," which resulted eventually in the Fukushima disaster. This lecture brings into light Japan's dilemma by reflecting on some critical incidents such as the 1954 contamination of the Lucky Dragon 5 followed by the anti-nuclear surge as well as some nuclear-related works such as Astro Boy, Godzilla and Hiroshima Mon Amour.



Keiko ISHII
Associate Professor of Psychology,
Kobe University

4. July 31 (4th Period)

Cultural Psychology: A Comparative Perspective

Cultural psychologists have explored a mutual relationship between culture and the mind by addressing how cultural practices influence the manner in which people think, feel, and behave, and how people's culturally constructed psychological processes shape social and cultural environments. In my lecture, I will describe the theoretical framework of studies from a cross-cultural perspective. Next, I will present some of the recent studies on the mode of thought in terms of a comparison between Western and Eastern cultures and an exploration of mechanisms underlying cultural differences. Finally, I will discuss future directions in this research area.



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5. August 4 (4th Period)

Japan's Hamlet



Kaori ASHIZU

Associate Professor of English Literature, Kobe University

This lecture will consider how Japanese writers responded to Hamlet, the world-famous Shakespeare tragedy. By introducing several adaptations of the play, I will illustrate how different Japanese authors negotiated the personal, cultural, and national issues and conflicts that arose when they associated their work with Shakespeare's.

6. August 5 (4th Period)

Blossoms Before Moss: Rethinking Zen Aesthetics at Saihōji Temple



Molly VALLOR

Assistant Professor of Japanese Studies, Kobe University

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Saihōji temple in Western Kyoto is better known today as "The Moss Temple" ("Kokedera"). With its green moss carpet and dry rock waterfall, the garden is often held up as a prime example of medieval Zen landscape design. Pre-modern literature about the temple, however, suggests that Saihōji was celebrated not for its muted moss or austere rocks but for its vibrant cherry blossoms—a feature not commonly associated with Zen in the modern mind. This lecture will examine the vital role played the cherry blossoms in literature about Saihōji, and, in doing so, invite students to challenge their assumptions about Zen Buddhist aesthetics.

7. August 6 (3rd Period)

Globalizing the Ethics of Emptiness: On the Reception and Possibilities of Watsuji's Ethics in English



Anton Luis Sevilla

Instructor of Ethics, Ateneo de Manila University of Ethics, Philippines

Watsuji's Ethics emerged within the context of the influx of Western philosophy into Japan and World War II, as an attempt to carve out a Japanese theory of ethics that might support Japan through this turbulent period. However, Watsuji's reception in the English language has appropriated him for largely different ends. I will examine attempts to use Watsuji to rethink the west's own problems—relationality, the liberal-communitarian debates, moral relativism—focusing on the Buddhist-inspired idea of emptiness as the core of his contribution, thus demonstrating both philosophical analysis and a case in the dynamics of the inter-cultural transfer of philosophical ideas.

8. August 6 (4th Period): Discussion

Moderator:
Hideyuki YAMAMOTO

Professor of American Literature,
Kobe University

Round-table discussion on the topics related to the preceding lectures. The students are encouraged to actively participate in the discussion so as to deepen their understanding and broaden their perspectives.