

Japan in Transition vol.1

Find Your “Oshi” (discover what you love)

Lecture Syllabus

Lectures: Orientation & Lecture 1

Day&Time:	July 1, 9:00 – 10:40
Theme:	Kawaii as Transboundary Culture
Lecturer:	Prof. Kyoko Koma, School of Information and Communication, Meiji University
Abstract:	What exactly is ‘kawaii’? Both in Japan and abroad, the term ‘kawaii’ has long been used as one of the words representing the Japanese aesthetic sensibility. However, even if one believes they share a common understanding of ‘kawaii’ with someone else, there is a very real possibility that they are actually referring to entirely different things. ‘Kawaii’ is a form of trans-cultural phenomenon that has been constructed across various ‘boundaries’ such as era, region and identity. In this course, through lectures and group discussions grounded in the humanities and trans-cultural studies, we will examine the diversity of ‘kawaii’ and explore one aspect of the ‘essence’ of Japanese culture.

Lecture 2

Day&Time:	July 1, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Blues People: The American Jazz Soundtrack to Japanese Resilience
Lecturer:	Prof. Mark Panek, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Hawaii at Hilo
Abstract:	From a city-leveling earthquake and on through the destruction of a world war, economic rise and collapse, and a tsunami whose tragic aftermath resonated worldwide, Japan’s story of collective resilience is matched across time only by the history of…Black Americans…first enslaved, then “freed” into new forms of institutionalized oppression that have never really ended. “The Blues,” born in the American South to give voice to collective suffering: over the past century this music’s rise has marched in parallel here in Japan, its bent notes allowing the sufferers to move past unspeakable loss into a hopeful future.

Lecture 3

Day&Time:	July 2, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Artificial Intelligence and the Legal System: A Social Science Approach

Lecturer:	Prof. Shozo Ota, School of Law, Meiji University
Abstract:	
Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is exerting profound and pervasive influences across society, including within legal systems. Legal practice, adjudication, and legislation are undergoing transformative (and potentially disruptive) changes driven by AI technologies. At the same time, the legal system itself faces formidable challenges in determining how to regulate AI properly. This lecture begins by outlining the fundamental nature of AI, followed by a conceptual exploration of how an "AI judge" might be designed to perform fact-finding and render legal decisions. Next, it examines AI's impacts on legal practice, litigation, and legislative processes. The discussion then turns to my social scientific investigations into public attitudes toward AI and law. The lecture concludes with an exposition of the theory of co-evolution between law and technology.	

Lecture 4

Day&Time:	July 3, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Disaster Resilience in Japan: Lessons from History, Community, and Innovation
Lecturer:	Prof. Mikio Ishiwatari, School of Business Administration, Meiji University
Abstract:	
Japan has long been exposed to a wide range of natural hazards — floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions — and has continuously evolved its approaches to disaster management throughout history. This class examines how governments, local communities, and the private sector have collaborated over centuries to build a more resilient society, and how the country is now preparing for disasters intensified by climate change. Students will learn that disaster management in Japan integrates not only structural measures, such as levees and seawalls, but also community-based activities, institutional design, and multi-level governance.	

Lecture 5

Day&Time:	July 6, 9:00 – 10:40
Theme:	Japan in Transition: Migration and Intercultural Cohesion
Lecturer:	Prof. Keizo Yamawaki, School of Global Japanese Studies, Meiji University
Abstract:	
This lecture explores how Japan is responding to an increasingly diverse population. While often seen as a homogeneous society, Japan has experienced a rapid rise in foreign residents in recent years. The lecture introduces the concept of tabunka kyosei and examines its development as a locally driven approach to migrant integration. It then discusses current challenges, particularly the gap between growing diversity and institutional design, and proposes an "intercultural cohesion" perspective that emphasizes interaction and the need for more systematic approaches to inclusion in Japan.	

Lecture 6

Day&Time:	July 6, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Expanding the Future with Origami: From Mathematics to Engineering
Lecturer:	Prof. Sachiko Ishida, School of Science and Technology, Meiji University

Abstract:

Origami is a flat form prior to folding, but transforms into three-dimensional structures through folding. This course covers deployable structures that can be compactly folded and largely expanded, as well as lightweight and high-strength core structures. It also explores applications of origami in everyday products and technologies, incorporating research conducted by undergraduate and graduate students at Meiji University. An origami workshop will be included as part of the course.

Lecture 7

Day&Time:	July 7, 9:00 – 10:40
Theme:	Population Issues and Its Socio-Economic Impacts in Japan
Lecturer:	Prof. Hisakazu Kato, School of Political Science and Economics, Meiji University

Abstract:

The purpose of this lecture is to introduce the population problems and its impacts in Japan.

Japan is facing a shrinking population due to low fertility rates, and it is also well known as the oldest country in the world. These population issues affect many fields of the economy and society from various viewpoints.

This lecture will describe the broad areas closely related to population decline, very low fertility, and deep aging. These areas include the labor market, pension system, medical and long-term care, and economic growth. The lecture will also introduce public policies aimed at improving these population-related problems.

Lecture 8

Day&Time:	July 7, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Manga, Anime, Games and the City of Tokyo
Lecturer:	Prof. Kaichiro Morikawa, School of Global Japanese Studies, Meiji University

Abstract:

One distinctive feature of Japanese manga, anime, and video games is that many works are set in real locations across Japan, including numerous specific districts in Tokyo. This goes beyond merely depicting recognizable cityscapes as backdrops; rather, these real places form the very foundation of the shared sense of reality upon which characters and their stories are constructed. In turn, these characters and narratives enrich those locations by layering them with fictional memories, giving rise to a hybridized reality of Tokyo. This presentation seeks to explore the dynamic interrelationships between Japanese manga, anime, video games, and the city of Tokyo.

Lecture 9

Day&Time:	July 8, 9:00 – 10:40
Theme:	Fermentation — Science and Culture —
Lecturer:	Prof. Harushi Nakajima, School of Agriculture, Meiji University

Abstract:

Various fermented foods are produced around the world. In this lecture, I will scientifically explain the benefits of fermented foods. Furthermore, I will discuss the science behind the production methods and health benefits of familiar foods such as cheese, wine, and vinegar, as well as the cultures that have nurtured these fermented foods.

Lecture 10

Day&Time:	July 8, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Japan in Transition: Diversity, Migration, and Society
Lecturer:	Prof. Reiko Nebashi, School of Information and Communication, Meiji University
Abstract:	
This class aims to help students understand the current state of diversity in Japan. Since the 1990s, Japan has shifted from a country of emigration to one of immigration. Although the proportion of foreign residents remains lower than in many Western countries, it has been steadily increasing, and it is projected that by 2070, one in ten people in Japan will be a foreign national. While many foreign residents live in major urban areas, they also tend to form concentrated communities. A well-known example is the large Brazilian population in Gunma Prefecture. This class explores why such concentrations occur, as well as their advantages and challenges, while examining broader social trends in Japan. In the afternoon, students will participate in a field trip to an area with a high concentration of foreign residents.	

Lecture 11

Day&Time:	July 9, 9:00 – 10:40
Theme:	Japan Pop: The Appeal and Potential of Japanese Visual Culture
Lecturer:	Prof. Masafumi Monden, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney
Abstract:	
Beneath its "pop" and "kawaii" surface, Japanese visual culture often harbours a world that is transgressive, unconventional, and at times unsettling. Drawing on a range of examples, this lecture explores these hidden depths and reflects on the appeal and potential of Japanese visual culture.	

Lecture 12

Day&Time:	July 9, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Beyond Boundaries: Material Culture and the Spirit of Challenge
Lecturer:	Prof. Masafumi Monden, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney
Abstract:	
Material culture is where boundaries intersect — between body and society, norm and deviation, the visible and the invisible. Drawing on a range of examples, this lecture examines how overlooked practices and practitioners have challenged established frameworks and opened new cultural possibilities.	

Lecture 13

Day&Time:	July 13, 9:00 – 10:40, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Preparation for Final Presentation
Abstract:	
In this session, students will work in their assigned groups (3–4 members) to prepare for the final presentation. Based on the lectures, field trips, and cultural experiences gained throughout the program, students will synthesize their findings and develop a presentation on a specific assigned theme. Faculty members will be available to provide	

guidance and feedback as students structure their arguments and design their visual materials.

Lecture 14

Day&Time:	July 14, 9:00 – 10:40, 10:50 – 12:30
Theme:	Final Presentation
Abstract:	
As the culmination of the program, each group will deliver a 15-minute presentation followed by a 5-minute Q&A session. Using the knowledge and insights acquired from all previous activities, students are expected to present their unique perspectives on the assigned theme. This session encourages active intellectual exchange, where students demonstrate their understanding of Japanese culture and society through critical analysis and group collaboration.	

Field Trips:

Field trip 1

Day&Time:	July 1, p.m.
Theme:	Discover Sumida/Fukagawa
Lecturer:	Prof. Mark Panek, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Hawaii at Hilo
Abstract:	
Guided by Prof. Panek, students will explore the Sumida and Fukagawa districts to uncover Tokyo's history of resilience and its deep cultural roots. This trip includes visits to memorial museums to learn about the Kanto Earthquake and WWII, alongside the Kokugikan museum to experience the world of sumo. The day offers a unique opportunity to witness the intersection of Japan's traditional "shitamachi" spirit and its modern urban landscape.	

Field trip 2

Day&Time:	July 3, p.m.
Theme:	Disaster Resilience and Emergency Preparedness
Lecturer:	Prof. Mikio Ishiwatari, School of Business Administration, Meiji University
Abstract:	
Students will visit "Sona Area Tokyo," a leading disaster prevention facility, to gain hands-on experience in earthquake survival and emergency management. Under the guidance of Prof. Ishiwatari, this trip provides a practical understanding of Japan's innovative and community-based approaches to disaster resilience.	

Field trip 3

Day&Time:	July 6, p.m.
Theme:	Immersing in Japanese Manga and Subcultures
Lecturer:	-
Abstract:	
This program begins with a visit to the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures to explore	

the extensive history of Manga. Afterward, students will participate in a creative workshop and cultural exchange with members of Meiji University's Manga Research Society.

Field trip 4

Day&Time:	July 7, p.m.
Theme:	University Life and Cultural Exchange
Lecturer:	-
Abstract:	
Students will explore the Meiji University Izumi Campus through a guided tour led by student supporters, fostering personal connections and peer exchange. The highlights include a special visit to the Meiji University Sumo Club, where students can observe traditional practice and interact with the athletes.	

Field trip 5

Day&Time:	July 8, p.m.
Theme:	Diversity and Migration in Urban Japan
Lecturer:	Prof. Reiko Nebashi, School of Information and Communication, Meiji University
Abstract:	
Accompanied by students from the Nebashi Seminar, participants will explore the Shinjuku and Okubo areas to observe the reality of Japan's growing multicultural society. This walking tour encourages students to analyze urban diversity and migrant integration through direct observation and dialogue with local Japanese students.	

Yamanaka Workshop:

Day&Time:	July 10 - 12
Theme:	Collaborative Learning and Cultural Integration
Abstract:	
During this off-campus workshop, students will participate in various activities and team-building exercises alongside Meiji University student supporters. This intensive session also serves as a platform for collaborative learning (Kyoshu), where students work together to finalize their group insights and prepare for the final presentations.	

Please note: The program schedule, including lecture topics, dates, times, and field trip destinations, is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances or administrative reasons.

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