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“Japan Studies 2: Modern Japanese Literature”

Purpose:

The aim of this course is to introduce students to major works and themes in modern Japanese literature in English translation. In the class, we read six short stories by Japanese authors from the Meiji Era (1868 – 1912) to contemporary times including Higuchi Ichiyō 樋口一葉, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, and Murakami Haruki 村上春樹. Some of the themes we examine include gender, class, war, and globalization.

Course objectives:

- Deepen our knowledge of Japanese literature including key works, subjects, and themes
- Critically analyze the elements of literary works including point of view, plot, and themes.
- Improve our academic-English ability by reading, writing, and discussing works of literature in English
- Learn to write about literature including how to construct arguments, use evidence from the text, and cite sources

Method of instruction

In this course, we read six short stories by Japanese authors in English translation. We spend approximately two weeks (two class periods) reading and discussing each story. Along with the reading, students will complete a study guide made by the instructor titled [Elements of a Story](#). The study guide contains nine main points to investigate including narrative voice, plot, and themes. Students should type their answers to this study guide on the computer and bring the completed assignment to the next class.

In class, students will use Elements of a Story to discuss the story in groups. Students will also answer and discuss comprehension questions about the text to further their understanding of key themes and concepts. In addition, the instructor will guide students on how to write about literature. Toward this end, we will investigate examples of critical essays about literature, as well as learn how to construct arguments and support them with evidence from the text, and how to properly cite sources.

Some weeks, students will be asked to write their opinions on themes from the text in short written essays. Students should complete these by the following week and use them to discuss their opinions in class group-work. Midway through the semester there will be a quiz to measure students' knowledge and comprehension of the first three stories we read in class. Students are

also asked to submit a five-page written report about one of the class readings by the end of the semester. The report should demonstrate students' grasp of the historical context, content, and key subjects and themes.

Method of evaluation

Elements of a story: 40%

Other written homework: 20%

Final written report: 20%

In-class work (including discussion): 10%

Midterm quiz: 10%

Textbook

Goossen, Theodore W. ed. *The Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Schedule

Class 1:

- Introduction to the course and reading modern Japanese literature
- Discuss how to analyze works of literature using [Elements of a Story](#)
 - [Short folktale "Two Frogs"](#)

Class 2:

Reading: Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, "Sansho the Steward" 『山椒大夫』

(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000129/files/689_23257.html)

- Discuss the story in groups and as a class
- Discuss "plot" using the [Plot Pyramid](#)

Class 3:

Reading: Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, "Sansho the Steward" 『山椒大夫』

(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000129/files/689_23257.html)

- Discuss Elements of a Story
- Discuss the [Basic Written Report Format](#) (<https://goo.gl/qSs5Ei>)
- Homework: Write a short opinion essay about one of the following topics: 1) The roles of women in pre-modern and modern Japan; 2) Slavery and class; 3) Sacrifice. Use the "Basic Written Report Format" given by the instructor.

Class 4:

Reading: Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, "The Third Night" 『夢十夜』より「第三夜」

(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000148/files/799_14972.html)

- Discuss Elements of a Story
- Homework: Write a short descriptive and/or opinion essay about one of the following topics: 1) Dreams; 2) Crime and punishment; 3) Guilt

Class 5:

Reading: Higuchi Ichiyō 樋口一葉, "Separate Ways" 『わかれ道』

(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000064/files/391_15301.html)

- Discuss the story in groups and as a class
- Homework: Write a short opinion essay about one of the following topics: 1) The roles of women in Meiji vs. contemporary society; 2) Class relations in Meiji vs. contemporary society.

Class 6:

Reading: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, "In a Grove" 『藪の中』

(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000879/files/179_15255.html)

- Discuss the story in groups and as a class
- Discuss student opinion essays in groups and as a class
- Homework: Write a short essay about one of the following topics: 1) "Justice"; 2) Relativity vs. objectivity; 3) The untrustworthy narrator

Class 7:

****[MIDTERM QUIZ](#)****

(Study all study guides, notes, and elements of a story to prepare for the quiz)

- Discuss how to make arguments and use evidence when writing about literature

Class 8:

Reading: Miyazawa Kenji 宮沢賢治, "The Bears of Nametoko" 『なめとこ山の熊』

(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000081/files/1939_18755.html)

- Discuss the story in groups and as a class
- Complete the [Reading Analysis Questions](#) worksheet

Class 9:

Reading: Kajii Motojirō 梶井基次郎, "Lemon" 『檸檬』

(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000074/files/424_19826.html)

- Discuss the story in groups and as a class

- Homework: Write about a time when you did something spontaneous and/or irrational

Class 10 (11/20):

Reading: Hayashi Fumiko 林芙美子, "The Accordion and the Fish Town" 『風琴と魚の町』
(Japanese: https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000291/files/1814_24391.html)

- Discuss Elements of a Story
- Discuss subjects, themes, and metaphor

Class 11 (11/27):

Reading: Enchi Fumiko 円地文子 "The Flower-Eating Crone" 『花食い姥』

- Discuss the story in groups and as a class
- Class activity: Individually or in groups, choose one of our class stories from the second half of this semester (after the midterm test). Using Elements of a Story, your study guides, and [Talking about Literature](#) prepare a short presentation. You may use notes and/or a prepared script in your talk. Present your findings two weeks from this day.

Class 12 (12/4):

Reading: Hirabayashi Taiko 平林たい子 "Blind Chinese Soldiers" 『盲中国兵』

- Discuss the story in groups and as a class
- Class activity: Continue preparing your presentations on one of our class stories.

Class 13 (12/11):

CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Class 14

Film: *Rashomon* 『羅生門』 (1950), Dir. Kurosawa Akira 黒澤明

Class 15

Film: *Rashomon* 『羅生門』 (1950), Dir. Kurosawa Akira 黒澤明

- Discuss class responses to the film and the class (readings)