Anthropology 175S: Images of and Ethnographies from Japan

Winter 2009
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45
Room: Fowler A139
Office Hours: Tuesday 12-2

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Course Description

Japan is perhaps the first “non-Western” society that became a highly industrialized society. This made Japan as a society that the West must maintain extensive communication. Nevertheless, the more is spoken and written about Japan, the more “exoticized” Japan seems to have become. What is interesting is that the Japanese society has taken over this exoticized version of Japan, attempting to set itself apart from the West.

The main objective of this course is twofold. First, we will examine the discourse of Orientalism: why and how the West has exoticized Japan; why and how Japan has exoticized itself; and what the consequences of the production of such discourses have been in the history of the US-Japan relationships. Second, we will try to understand what is behind these exoticized images through our reading of ethnography of Japan.

Course Reading

Book required- available at UCLA Store (any inquiry should be addressed to the store).
John Dower. War Without Mercy.
(A library copy will be placed on 2-hour reserve at the Powell Library.)

Reading Packet- available at COPYMAT at 925 Westwood Blvd. Tel: 310-709-3791

(Tentative) Course Schedule

* means that the reading is in the Reader.

Week 1: January 6, 8 (and 13)
Japan: History and People

Week 2: January 13 and 15
Orientalism
Read: Pierre Lotti, Madame Chrysanthème (selections).

Week 3 and 4: January 20, 22 and 27
The legacy of Orientalism: The American View of Japan during the Crisis Period
Read: John Dower, War without Mercy (Preface, Parts I and II).
Video: Know Your Enemy: Japan
Week 4: January 29
The Founding “Mother” of the anthropology of Japan in the United States

Week 5: February 3 and 5
Was the Counter-Orientalism Possible?
Read: Dower, Parts III and IV.
Video Clips: Kurosawa Akira, Sugata Sanshiro, Part II

We will return to the questions of images in conclusion.

Mid-term Exam (either February 10 or 12- this is still a tentative plan.)

In the second half of the course, we will read the ethnographies of Japan, and cover such topics as kinship, family, religion, economy, and women’s places in contemporary Japan.

Week 6 through 9
Ethnography of Japanese Families and Companies

A. Japanese kinship systems and “religions”
Read: *Harumi Befu, “Corporate Emphasis and Patterns of Descent in the Japanese Family.”

B. Japanese Families
Read: *M. Hamabata, “Marriage” in his Crested Kimono.
*Gail Lee Bernstein, “Haruko and Shô-ichi” and “Haruko’s Work” in her Haruko’s World.

C. Japanese Companies

Week 10: Conclusion
(Throughout my lectures, I try to incorporate film clips that are not listed in this syllabus.)

Requirements
Regular attendance and preparation for the class (reading required books and articles) are taken seriously.
There will be one mid-term in-class exam (that covers the first half of the lecture and reading/visual materials) and one final take-home exam (that covers the entire course materials).

While I cannot specify the date of the mid-term exam yet, the final exam is due on Thursday of the exam week. Please submit it to the departmental office (Haines 341) by 3 p.m. I will not accept the late papers.

THERE IS NO RE-TAKE OF THE MID-TERM EXAM AS YOU ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND EVERY CLASS (MEDICAL EMERGENCY IS THE ONLY EXCEPTION WITH A NOTE FROM YOUR DOCTOR).

(Re)Grading
For the sake of fair grading, please refrain from aggressive requests of “re-grading.” In case you have questions about your grades, please note the following.

1) I accept such comments only in writing. You should write down your questions and comments that must be specific to the questions. You should do so ONLY AFTER you carefully read my model answers.

2) You cannot ask me to “find” the elements of answer in your exam. Your entire answer must be written clearly without grammatical errors.

3) I will consider your class performance (attendance and preparation for class), mid-term exam (about 40%), and final exam (about 60%) for your final grade.