

**SOCI 123**  
**Japanese Culture Inside/Out**  
*Prof. Jeff Tirshfield*

Fall 2023

Time: Tues/Thurs 3:30 pm – 4:50 pm

Location: Podem 1A18

Course TA: Looks like just me this time out

email: [jtirshfi@ucsd.edu](mailto:jtirshfi@ucsd.edu)

Office Hours: Tues. 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm, an on-campus coffee house to be named

**Course Information:**

This course takes a historical approach to exploring Japanese culture, and examines certain cultural encounters and dialogues between Japan and the West. We will explore ways in which specific socio-political/socio-economic structures (from Samurai-based Feudalism to *Baburu Keiki* [the Bubble Economy] and *Ushinawareta Jūnen* [the Lost Decade]), cultural practices (from Martial Arts [*Jiu-jitsu*, *Judo*, etc.] and *Seppuku* [Ritual disembowelment] to *Keiretsu* [Cross-ownership of businesses] and *Madogiwazoku* [Employees with no employment responsibilities]), philosophical and religious practices (*Bushido* [Samurai Code of Ethics], Buddhism and Shinto), and cultural objects (*Irezumi* [Tattoos] and *Kimono*) have developed within Japan, how they have formed through interactions with others, and how these aspects of culture have had cultural influence external to Japan. We will consider the importance and limitations of national boundaries and transnational relationships, and the relationship between the production of meaning and political, economic, and social factors.

We will draw on a number of primary, scholarly, business, and artistic sources, paying particular attention to transitional periods in Japanese history and the influence that developments during those transitions had on modern Japanese culture and its interactions with the West. Particular attention will be paid to the appeal of the idea of Japan in the West and the West in Japan, and to the relationship between cultural production and changes in the political economy of Japan in the world. What I hope to “prove” to you—in as much as “prove” really means illustrate—is that culture matters. Threads of the old are woven to create culture anew. With regard to weaving a 700-year feudal history into an advanced post-industrial economy, Japan is unique. We will explore Japan’s uniqueness.

Because the material we will be reading and the topics we will be discussing are so interesting, I ask that you contribute to group knowledge by sharing your thoughts and insights. Thursdays of most weeks (10/05, 10/12, 10/19, 10/26, 11/02, 11/16, 11/30, and 12/07 — weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10), I will ask you, working in quasi-small groups, to comment on and discuss a [historical] cultural structure or practice exemplified within the readings, and to contribute to a class-wide discussion—I will be an active participant and guide. While I encourage all group members to participate in each class discussion, one member of each group will be responsible for summarizing their group response(s) in writing—2 pages (1-inch margins, Times New Roman 11 or 12 pt, names of all group members present). It is my plan that each person provide a written summary only once during the term.

I expect you, like the scholars we will read, to apply theory where relevant. *While the discussion topics will fit thematically with the readings for the week, your weekly summary should not be a summary of the aforementioned readings, it should be your group’s thoughts, position(s), and assertions regarding the question(s) posed.*

Just a note: while our themes are holy (in a decidedly non-religious way), our discussion topics are not. Time permitting, we should be able to explore other thematically related topics of interest to the class. More on this later.

Our *Mokuyokai* (Mitsubishi has their *Kinyokai*, we have a *Mokuyokai*) discussions will last between 45 and 60 minutes. I expect each group member to be prepared—that means having completed the readings and having attended Tuesday’s lecture. The group member responsible for sending me the group summary should email it

to me ([jtirshfi@ucsd.edu](mailto:jtirshfi@ucsd.edu)) by Friday at 8:00 p.m. the day after the discussion—no later. These discussions will account for 25% of your course grade—10% for the paper you write, plus 2% for your contributions to each of the other papers, and 1% for contributing to all eight (but only if all eight have been completed); if you are not present, you will not receive credit. Late papers will not receive full credit.

You are expected to attend lectures (yea, all of them—how else can you take part in the *Mokuyokai*?). As you might ascertain by the tenor of this syllabus, it is my plan to seek your input and participation—a small victory for supporters of Socrates and Hegel everywhere. If you are not in attendance, you can't share—and not sharing can have a negative impact on your grade. Participation and Attendance will account for 5% of your course grade.

There will be an in-class midterm. The short answer essays will be based on the readings, lectures, and class discussions—another reason to grace us with your presence. The midterm will account for 30% of your course grade.








Finally, there will be a final worth 40% of your course grade. Don't stress about it, it's eleven weeks away. If you attend class, do the readings, and participate, you will do just fine. Seriously, you will.

Oh, one more thing; I am here for you. I teach because I view education as a calling and because I learn just as much from you, as you learn from me. That learning feeds back into my research, it's sort of an autopoietic system, but as such it requires both you and I to contribute. I am happy to meet with you during office hours, when I practice *jiu-jitsu* or yoga, or at some other mutually convenient time. I love to talk shop. Use me as a resource; I know stuff; that's why they pay me the big bucks.

### **Evaluation:**

- Discussion summaries (25% of course grade)
- Midterm exam (30% of course grade) - Short Answer, Short Essay
- Final exam (40% of course grade) – Two to four prompts
- Participation and Attendance (5% of course grade)

### **Required Materials – online at HathiTrust.org, online at CalCopy, and at a bookstore:**

-  Okakura. *The Book of Tea* – PDF available online on Canvas, at [HathiTrust.org](https://www.hathiitrust.org/), and at an online bookseller near you
-  Tanizaki. *In Praise of Shadows* – PDF available online on Canvas, at [archive.org](https://archive.org/), and at an online bookseller near you
-  Nitobe. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* – PDF available online at Canvas, [HathiTrust.org](https://www.hathiitrust.org/), and at an online bookseller near you
-  Rankin. 2011. *Seppuku* – Available for purchase at the UCSD Bookstore and at an online bookseller near you
-  Ito and Hoshi. 2020. *The Japanese Economy* – Available for purchase at the UCSD Bookstore and at an online bookseller near you
-  Movies held on Course Reserves (through UCSD Library):
  - *Shichinin no Samurai*
  - *The Magnificent Seven*
  - *Chushingura: Hana no Maki, Yuki no Maki*
  - *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*
-  PDFs contained in the SOCI 123 Japanese Culture Inside/Out Reader—available at Cal Copy, 3251 Holiday Court, #103, La Jolla, CA 92037 (Villa La Jolla Plaza--just off campus) – 858-452-9949. **To purchase a downloadable pdf or mailed hard copy of the reader, please click (or cut and paste) the following url: <https://calcopyucsd.com/products>**

The syllabus may (will) be updated throughout the course to address relevant social phenomena or social facts (for you Durkheim fans).

**Note on the (non)use of Electronics:**

Please place all electronics on silent mode during lectures. Also, cool it with the fuzzy kitty videos, TikTok influencer talks, YouTube fail videos, phone calls, and yes, even texting. You think you may be able to multitask—research into the subject suggests that you can't—but, I am easily distracted.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students should be familiar with UCSD's regulations concerning plagiarism and the integrity of scholarship. Plagiarism is serious, and suspected cases will be referred to UCSD's Office of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please ask me.

**ChatGPT and the like:**

Generative AI tools are just that, tools. Don't rely on them to write your papers, fact-check your work, or provide or verify sources. These tools work tremendously fast, yet they are tremendously buggy—hallucinations are but one issue. Remember, these tools use the information provided by their programmers and the Internet to inform their responses to your queries; and the Internet is riddled with—to quote the title of an excellent book by Harry Frankfurt— [*On*] *Bullshit*.

Use these tools to explore and experiment. Question their results... our brains are still infinitely better, and are more capable of addressing socially constructed ethical dilemmas.

## Schedule

### Week 0 [09/28]: A [very short] History of Japan, and a Discussion on Japanese Feudal Society

- Ikegami. *The Taming of the Samurai*. 3-43 (reader)

### Week 1 [10/03 & 10/05]: A [very short] History of Japan, a Discussion on Japanese Feudal Society con'd, and a Bit on Culture

- Okakura. *The Book of Tea*. 1-104 (entire book—don't stress about the length of the book, there are very few words on each written page)
- **Discussion 10/05**
  - Why tea? (Hint... it's not as much a question of taste, as it is one of geopolitics).

### Week 2 [10/10 & 10/12]: Japanese Cultural Migration During the Late Meiji Period

- Tanizaki. *In Praise of Shadows*. 1-42 (entire book—again, don't stress, it's a really short book)
- **Discussion 10/12**
  - Space, Place, Architecture, and *Karesansui*
  - Okakura and Tanizaki on gender

### Week 3 [10/17 & 10/19]: *Bushido's* Influence on Japanese Culture

- Nitobe. *Bushido: The Soul of the Samurai*. (book, Chapters 1-12)
- Watch the movie: *Shichinin no Samurai* (on your own; held in course reserves)
- **Discussion 10/19**
  - The influence of *Bushido* on Japanese literature
  - *Shichinin no Samurai* as exemplars of *Bushido*—Is the Kambei the ideal-type *Samurai* (hint: what is the meaning of *Samurai*?)?

### Week 4: [10/24 & 10/26]: *Bushido's* Influence on Japan and Beyond

- Nitobe. *Bushido: The Soul of the Samurai*. (book, Chapters 13-17)
- Benedict. *The Sword and the Chrysanthemum*. Chapter 4, pgs. 76-97 (reader)
- Friday. *Bushido or Bull? A Medieval Historian's Perspective on the Imperial Army and the Japanese Warrior Tradition*. 339-49 (reader)
- Ikegami. *Shame and the Samurai*. 1351-78 (reader)
- Watch the movie: *The Magnificent Seven* (on your own; held in course reserves)
- **Discussion 10/26**
  - *Gamanzuyoi* vs. Stoicism. The effect of religion and the political economy on moral and ethical systems. What ethical foundations led the characters in the movies *Shichinin no Samurai* and *The Magnificent Seven* to behave the way they did?

- Shame is the consequence of honor lost. Guilt is a finding that a rule or law has been violated—the absence of innocence. Guilt can be addressed via expiation or sanction. Can one atone or be sanctioned for shame? How are shame and guilt similar? How are they different? Contextualize these questions within the works of Nitobe, Ikegami, and Friday.

### **Week 5 [10/31 & 11/02]: *Seppuku***

- Rankin. *Seppuku*. 1-31, 87-102, 123-138, and 201-211 (book)
- Watch the movie: *Chushingura: Hana no Maki, Yuki no Maki* (on your own; held in course reserves)
- **Discussion 10/25**
  - Informal social controls and suicide. What was it that made suicide a rational outcome of shame in feudal Japan—a nod to Durkheim?
  - Given the change in the political economy of Japan over the past 150 years, why are suicide rates still higher than in most other post-industrial economies?

**\*\*\*MIDTERM EXAM, TUESDAY, November 7<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

### **Week 6 [11/07 & 11/09]: Religion**

- Bellah. *Tokugawa Religion*. 51-70 (reader)
- Nukariya. *The History of Zen in Japan*. 28-51 (reader)
- Griffis. *The Religions of Japan*. 37-58 (reader)
- **No Discussion... just a midterm on Tuesday 11/07**

### **Week 7 [11/14 & 11/16]: Martial Arts**

- Hurst. *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*. 27-46, 53-60, 64-88, 92-100 (reader)
- Kano. *Jiu-jitsu: The Old Samurai Art of Fighting Without Weapons* 192 (229) – 205 (242) (reader)
- Green & Svinth. *Martial Arts in the Modern World*. 47-59 and 61-70 (reader)
- **Discussion 11/16**
  - *Bugei, Bujitsu, Budo*. Why *Bu* in the context of sports? (hint: what is the meaning of Bu?)
  - Is Brazilian Jiu-jitsu really a unique martial art, or is it merely a *ryu* of *jiu-jitsu*? Further, does this matter? Why?

### **Week 8 [11/21 & 11/23]: *Yakuza* & Policing**

- Hill. *The Changing Face of the Yakuza*. 97-116 (reader)
- Bayley. *Forces of Order: Policing in Modern Japan*. 126-167 (reader)
- **Discussion 11/23**
  - **Enjoy Family, Friends and Turkey (or Tofuerky, or if you are me... Capt. Crunch Ahi)**

### **Week 9 [11/28 & 11/30]: *Zaibatsu & Bushido* as Business Ethic**

- Hosoya. *Zaibatsu Dissolution in Occupied Japan*. 1-14 (reader)
- Bisson. *Zaibatsu Dissolution in Japan*. 6-32 (reader)
- Ito and Hoshi. *The Japanese Economy*. TBA (Book)
- Watch the movie: *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (on your own; held in course reserves)
- **Discussion 11/30**
  - The connection of *Irezumi* to deviant actors—a carryover from last week
  - The connections between culture and policing—a carryover from last week
  - Carlos Ghosn and the limits of Japanese law - *Deru CEO wa Utareru*--the CEO who sticks out, gets hammered down
  - Is *Bushido* alive and well as the foundation of the Japanese work ethic, or is Jiro merely an anachronism?

### **Week 10 [12/05 & 12/07]: *Keiretsu, Ushinawareta [Ni]Jūnen* and Japan's Economic Future**

- Ito and Hoshi. *The Japanese Economy*. TBA (Book)
- **Discussion 12/07**
  - Carlos Ghosn and the limits of Japanese law - *Deru CEO wa Utareru*--the CEO who sticks out, gets hammered down—if we did not get to this last week
  - Is *Bushido* alive and well as the foundation of the Japanese work ethic, or is Jiro merely an anachronism?—if we did not get to this last week
  - The effects of culture on the economy, and the economy on culture

**\*\*\*FINAL EXAM, Monday DECEMBER 11<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 PM\*\*\***