

Emnerapport

JAP4515 – Contemporary Japanese Culture and Society

Spring 2019

This is a research-based course that is optional for first-year students in the MA Modern Japan program. The course requires active participation from all students. Each week, two or three students are responsible for introducing the English-language readings and preparing discussion questions. In addition, all course participants collectively read excerpts from Japanese academic and literary texts. The course centres on one core topic, which is approached from various thematic and theoretical angles. This topic serves as a prism for the study of contemporary Japanese culture and society. In previous years, these topics were “The production of heritage in contemporary Japan” (2017) and “Multispecies Japan” (2018). In the spring of 2019, the main thematic focus was “Japan in the Anthropocene”.

The course was conducted according to plan, with no significant changes. Seven students signed up for the course and attended the initial classes. Six of these continued and took the examination. The examination consisted of three parts: a midterm essay (25%), a presentation (25%), and a final essay on a topic chosen by the student herself (50%). Essay topics were original, and most of the essays were insightful and well-written. The final grades were one A, four Bs, and one C.

Students were very positive about the course. They thought the topics were highly interesting, even though some of the readings were challenging. They appreciated the interactive format.

This course will be taught again in the autumn of 2019 and follow largely the same format. One change that will be made is that the examination will consist of two parts instead of three; i.e. there will be no midterm essay. The reason for this is logistic: in the autumn, the course will be taught intensively for a period of only six weeks, with two classes per week. The overall course theme will change, too, like every semester, but some of the readings and discussion topics will remain.

14 October 2019

Aike Rots