

First year seminar, *Understanding the Other: The History of Modern Japan*

Professor Andrew Gordon

Fall semester, 2000

Week One (Sept. 26): **Classics of Orientalism**

Reading: Pierre Loti, *Mme Chrysanthemum*, preface, chs 2,20,22,34, 42, 45, 50-52 and Puccini, *Madame Butterfly*. Edward Said, *Orientalism* Chapter 1, pp. 1-9. *Sheila Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes*, Chapters 1,2,5. * David Howell, "Visions of the Future in Meiji Japan," in Goldman, Gordon, ed., *Historical Perspectives on Contemporary East Asia*.

Focus on the concept of orientalism. Critique of two versions of a classic orientalist work. Draw out key themes in such work: treatment of women and gender, binary of East and West. Discussion of major issues in 19th century Japanese history.

Week Two (Oct. 3): **Contemporary Orientalism**

Reading: Michael Crichton, *The Rising Sun* (or film). James Fallows, "Containing Japan" series in *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1989), pp. 40-54. *Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes* Chs 6-8. Takeshi Fujitani, "Minsh_shi as Critique of Orientalist Knowledge," *positions* 6:2 (fall 1998), pp. 306-11. Dorinne Kondo, *About Face*, pp. 240-50. *Garon, "State and Society in Interwar Japan," and Gordon, "Society and Politics from Transwar to Postwar Japan," in *Historical Perspectives on Contemporary East Asia*.

Follow up discussion on Orientalism, especially on the warrior stereotype and views of Japan as threat. Discussion of basic issues of 20th century Japanese history.

Week Three (Oct. 10): **Sayuri's hometown: Poverty and class structure of village Japan**

Readings: *Roughly first half of Arthur Golden, *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Robert Smith and Ella Wiswell, "Japanese Village Women," in *Journal of Japanese Society* 7:2 (1981), 259-84. Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcastes*, pp. 79-136. John Embree *Suyemura* chs. 3, 5, pp. 79-112, 158-78.

*Contrast the depiction of village poor and young women in *Memoirs* to some historical writings. Discuss diversity of interpretations among the historians as well as contrasts and similarities with *Memoirs*.*

Week Four (Oct. 17): **Sayuri's Choice? Individuals, families and labor markets**

Readings: Remainder of *Memoirs*. *Patricia Tsurumi, *Factory Girls*, Chs 6-10, pp. 103-90. Mark Ramseyer, *Odd Markets*, chs. 6-7, pp. 109-63.

Issue of families selling daughters into various forms of work or servitude (textiles, geisha apprenticeship, prostitution), and varied interpretations of this practice.

Week Five (Oct. 24) : **Sayuri's Job: women's experience as entertainers and sex workers**

Readings: Sheldon Garon "The World's Oldest Debate," American Historical Review 98 (June, 1993) pp. 710-32. Miriam Silverberg, "The Cafe Waitress Serving Modern Japan," in Steven Vlastos, ed., Mirror of Modernity, pp. 208-25. Liza Dalby, Geisha, ch. 5, pp. 77-95. Dorinne Kondo, Crafting Selves, ch. 7, pp. 229-257.

Contrasting interpretations of the experience of work as a geisha, as prostitute, and other forms of "modern" women's work (in the prewar era) as entertainers to men (cafe waitress).

Week Six (Oct. 31): **Sayuri's Patrons: the rich and privileged at work and play**

Readings: John Roberts, Mitsui: Three Centuries of Japanese Business chs. 18, 21-22, pp. 215-239, 281-323. John Dower, Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954 chs. 1, 3, pp.1-32, 55-92. John Cotter, Matsushita Leadership, chs. 5-10, pp. 61-145.

What were the men who patronized geisha doing the rest of the time, and how did they understand their public and private lives? Focus on the shift from the relatively liberal 1920s to the militarism of the 1930s, examining the world view of the elites who initiated and accepted this change, in comparison to the treatment of this shift offered in Memoirs.

Week Seven (Nov. 7): **Surviving the War: World War II and the Japanese homefront**

Readings: Tom Havens, Valley of Darkness ch. 2-3, 5-6, 9, pp. 10-52, 72-114, 154-73. Ted and Haruko Cook, Japan at War chs 7-8, 15-17, pp. 169-202, 305-72. John Dower, Essays in War and Peace ch 4 on "Seditious Graffiti," pp. 101-54..

The social history of the homefront, in work by historians, in oral history accounts, and in Memoirs.

Week Eight (Nov. 14): **GI's, Panpan, and Geisha: Social History of Occupied Japan**

Readings: *John Dower, Embracing Defeat, Intro and Part 2, pp. 19-30, 87-200. Yoshikuni Igarashi, "The Bomb, Hirohito, and History" positions 6, (Fall,1998) 261-302. James Michener, Sayonara (or film version).

The entry of American men into the world described in Memoirs. How have historians understood this era, and how has the experience furthered the development of the gendered binary of US-Japan relations?

Week Nine (Nov. 21): **Remaking Sayuri's World: Postwar Transformation of "Nightwork"**

Readings: *Anne Allison, Nightwork, pp. 1-123. Yuko Ogasawara, Salaried Men and Office Ladies, intro, pp. 1-16 and ch. 6, pp. 139-54. Shimizu Ikko, "Silver Sanctuary", in Made in Japan and other Japanese Business Novels pp. 33-57.

Discuss the debate on the ongoing place of women's sexualized work roles in Japanese society, with reference to the image in the final portion of Memoirs.

Week Ten (Nov. 28): **Orientalist Gaze From Japan**

Readings: Okakura Kakuz_, The Ideals of the East, pp. ix-13. Stefan Tanaka, Japan's Orient, Introduction, pp. 1-28. Jennifer Robertson, Takarazuka ch. 3, pp. 97-138.

Consider the converse phenomenon of essentializing views from Japan, either of other Asians, of Westerners (occidentalism?), or of Japan itself.

Week Eleven (Dec. 12): **Sayuri as Celebrity: The Reception of Memoirs of a Geisha**

Readings: Anne Allison essay on Memoirs. A selection of reviews of the book, and accounts of its worldwide success.

Week Twelve (Dec. 19 or reading period): **Orientalism Revisited**

Readings: David Henry Hwang, M. Butterfly. Dorinne Kondo, About Face, pp. 31-54. James Clifford, "One *Orientalism*," in The Predicament of Culture, pp. 255-76.

Wrap-up discussion: presentations by students on their papers, in progress, and summary discussion.

Seminar assignments:

There will be one weekly short written assignment or oral presentation for each student. Typically all students each week will be required to post to a class website, in advance of the class meeting, some sort of response to the readings (or pose questions generated by the readings for others to consider). One or two each week will be responsible instead for presenting to the group an oral digest of these responses to get things started.

There will also be one longer paper, with stepped assignments (hand in a proposal, hand in an outline, a bibliography, then a draft). There are two options for this paper. One is to prepare a research paper that digs in more deeply to a historical issue raised by the book and the other readings. Another is to read/view/listen to another major product of Western popular culture concerned with Japan, and research the contemporary reaction to it as well as make some comparisons between the image of Japan in that book or film, and the presentation in more scholarly studies, and the works studied in the course of the semester

Readings are relatively light in the final two weeks of the seminar, as students are also expected to begin working on their papers, which will be due in reading period.

Books for purchase (marked with asterisk on syllabus):

Arthur Golden, Memoirs.

Sheila Johnson, Japan through American Eyes

Merle Goldman and Andrew Gordon, ed., Historical Perspectives on Contemporary East Asia

Patricia Tsurumi, Factory Girls

John W. Dower, Embracing Defeat [not ordered in the Coop, but easily available in bookstores]

Anne Allison, Nightwork

Access to other readings:

The libretto of Madame Butterfly is available on the internet at:

<http://rick.stanford.edu/opera/Puccini/Butterfly>. You can read it online or print out as you wish.

Other readings are available on e-reserve and in the Harvard Yenching Library.