

22010 JAPANESE BUSINESS I

INSTRUCTOR: Peter O'Brien

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to selected aspects of Japanese business and management practice. Following the introduction to the course and to Japan, its business practices and culture, the course examines the role of the Japanese *kaisha* (or big business organization), the development and changing role of the salaryman, and the Japanese job-hunting ritual. It then focuses on developments and contemporary corporate practices in human resource management by examining issues such as the roles of women, part-time workers, and workforce and consumer diversity in modern Japanese business and management in the context of changing social conditions and attitudes. The course continues with a review of the cultural and historical development of Japanese business and management, including production practices such as the Toyota Production System. It concludes by examining changes in Japanese business practices since the collapse of the "Bubble Economy" and the possible resurgence of traditional merchant values in the present economic climate. Appropriate cultural and other issues are discussed when necessary. Class discussion on assigned readings supplements lectures, which as with all assignments and research materials, are delivered in English. The emphasis in the course is sociological and cultural. The course is not intended to be exhaustive but focuses on selected issues, though the schedule and content may change as circumstances dictate. There are no specific prerequisites.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Introduction to the course (organization, assessment, and readings) – what the course is and what it is not.
Introduction to Japan and to its business and culture.
2. The *Kaisha* and the salaryman
Reading: Barbara Presley Noble (1997), Review of "Inside the *Kaisha*: Demystifying Japanese business behavior," with concept extracts.
Reading: Noburu Yoshimura and Philip Anderson (1997), "The Making of a Salaryman."
3. Lecture and discussion: The *Kaisha* and the salaryman continued: changes in the social and working conditions of male and older employees.
Reading: John B. Williamson and Masa Higo (2007), "Older workers: lessons from Japan."
4. The Japanese job-hunting ritual ("*shuushoku katsudou*" or "*shuukatsu*"), its importance, and contemporary variants (e.g., *konkatsu*)
5. Lecture and discussion: Women in Japanese business life – entrepreneur or "career woman," "office lady," "parasite single," "material girl" or "losing dog?"
Reading: Jochen Legewie (2008) Japan lags European peers on female empowerment
Reading: Hiroko Nakata (2009) Female execs take up challenge
6. Lecture and discussion: "Freeters," *hikikomori*, *otaku*, *soshokukei*, and other youth trends in Japan.
Reading: Ron Adams (n.d.), Hikikomori/Otaku Japan's latest out-group: creating social outcasts to construct a national self-identity.
Reading: Reiko Kosugi (2005) The transition from school to work in Japan: Understanding the increase in *freeter* and jobless youth.
Reading: Tomoko Otake (2009), Blurring the boundaries.
7. Lecture and discussion: Foreigners and workforce diversity in the contemporary Japanese job market.
Reading: Takehiko Kambayashi (2008), Japanese youth help compatriots to embrace diversity.
Reading: Miki Tanikawa (2007), Japanese companies embrace diversity.
8. Lecture and discussion: Foreigners and workforce diversity in the contemporary Japanese job market - continued.
Reading: Joseph Coleman (2007), Foreigners, if conspicuous, hard to fit in
Reading: Kyodo News (2007) Foreign trainees facing chronic abuses: Firms refuse to stop exploiting interns as cheap labor, leading many to quit
Reading: Akemi Nakamura (2007), Foreigners still dogged by housing barriers
Reading: Shigeki Saka (2007), Why I published 'Foreigner underground crime file:' Editor makes his case and responds to critics.

9. Lecture and discussion: The origins of Japanese business and management practices.
Reading: Neil Barnwell (2007), Japanese management: its emergence into western consciousness and its long term impact (Asia-Pacific Economic and Business History Conference Paper).
Reading: Katsuhiko Nakagawa (2004), The Toyota Way: Japanese management in the global economy – up close and personal.
10. Lecture and discussion: Transitions in Japanese business and management practices.
Reading: Noriko Hama (2009), Traditional merchant values resurgent in recessionary Japan
Reading: Shawn Beifuss (2006), Reflections on transitions in Japanese business practices from the Bubble Era to today, Parts I – III.
11. Quiz
12. Oral presentations on research papers

TEXTS

Textbook: No specific text is required.

Required Readings

The Course Schedule lists required readings, which may be appropriate to more than one topic. Students will also be directed to online articles during class sessions.

Supplementary Readings

Other recommended readings may be given as and when appropriate.

ASSESSMENT

Attendance, participation, and meaningful contribution to classes 15%; Quiz 45%; PowerPoint-based presentation on research topic 10%; Major individual or group-based research paper 30%