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2015

Project Summary

My project is 1) to enrich my understanding of Japanese culture in order to appreciate more fully and explain to my students Japanese-American literature that I encounter in my work, 2) to identify subject matter that can be incorporated into courses that I currently teach, and 3) to identify topics that can generate new courses that can be offered at my university.

With this group perhaps it goes without saying that I have increased my understanding of Japanese culture exponentially! Regarding my second objective – identifying material to incorporate into existing courses – I can be more specific. I will include Raicho’s *In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun* in Women and Gender Studies courses. Other courses I teach in which I can now include some Japanese material include Introduction to Literature, my World Literature courses – ancient and modern, and Animals in Literature for the Animal Studies major.

As for my third objective (creating a new course) I would like to develop an interdisciplinary course for our new Asian Studies program and/or the Honors Program, which features interdisciplinary courses. This course would be centered around Commodore Perry’s successive visits to Japan and the effects of the agreements and relationships that he forged. Since my expertise is in American literature of the nineteenth century, and Perry’s interaction came mid-century, this is a perfect pivot point that would enable me to explore the Tokugawa and Meiji periods in Japan and the influence of Eastern thought on the great writers of America, such as Henry David Thoreau, who rewrote and expanded *Walden* after reading Eastern religious and philosophical writings.

I am very grateful that the Japan Studies Institute has given me the context and resources to broaden the courses I currently teach and to contribute to the new Asian Studies program at my university.

