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Curriculum Development Project

The course I have decided to enhance is the ENGL 2112: World Literature II course. This course traditionally covers the Enlightenment period to contemporary writing. Despite the scope, the literary offerings from Japan are underrepresented in the survey. It is especially important for this course to offer an exploration into Japanese literature and culture, as it is a core program requirement for the University. Since I work on the two-year degree campus, this course could be the only experience with Japanese literature some of the associate degree graduates or transfer students have during their college experience. With this in mind, I have chosen to incorporate five works from Japan.

I am using Zeami's *Atsumori* as a starting point. It is from the medieval period. It will establish a starting point to contrast with later works, both Japanese and European. The drama frames the conflict between personal desire and social obligation, with religion used as the answer to this age-old dilemma. I am adding materials to give students a clearer picture of the religious climate, history of that time period (pre-Edo period), the components of drama, and background from *Tales of Heike*. I can enhance the course offerings with essays like Paul Watt's "Shintoism and Buddhism: Wellsprings of Japanese Spirituality," clips of Noh performances, and videos of costumes from the Japanese National Noh Theater.

I plan on expanding the readings by adding works like Chikamatsu's *The Love Suicides at Amijima* from the Early Modern period. The rule of the Tokugawa, the urban setting of the play, and the new rise of merchants as patrons will help provide the cultural context for the drama. We can discuss the shift in purpose for the samurai brought about by years of peace. The inspiration of the play from real suicides, the Tanabata festival, and emphasis of social obligation may give students a glimpse into the cultural elements of the drama. Again, a theme in the play is the conflict between personal desire and social obligation. Religion appears in the text, but not as the powerful solution to the problem, as it does in Noh drama. I plan on showing clips from the movie, *The Love Suicides*, as well as clips of Bunraku performances to show students what the puppet theater was like.

I plan on incorporating more poetry and philosophy of poetry in the form of excerpts from Kitamura Kigin's *The Mountain Well*. This piece can help students understand the categorization of seasonal words in haikai, which can act as a springboard for discussing the Japanese idea of man's connection to nature. The treatise and the form will allow my class to explore the evolution of Japanese poetry. I can show the students other Japanese poetical forms, like Renga. From there, presenting excerpts from Basho's *The Narrow Road Deep North* will allow students to see how Basho elevated the haiku and blended several genres to form the work.

At the end of the semester, I will bring the students full-circle by including Kanzaburo Oe's *The Clever Rain Tree*. This Nobel Peace Prize winner is known for his political stance. His work will provide a nice close, as students once again will be able to discuss how the Japanese view of social conformity, peace,

and politics come together. To fully appreciate his work, I will need to help students understand Japan's foreign policy, identity as a nation, and role in global politics.