

AASCU

Japan Studies Institute 2017, San Diego, California

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Project Summary:

I have two classes that I plan to substantially redesign using what I have learned at the JSI. One is my modern East Asian History class, and the other is HIST 290: East Asian History through Films. I will revise my syllabi, and instead of using standard textbooks, I will create course packets that incorporate readings and materials regarding Japanese politics, popular culture, food, and Japan's international relationships in a global context so that students can get the most up-to-date knowledge about Japan.

Most students in my college have little to no knowledge about Japan. It is critical to attract students to the study of, and keep students' interest in, Japan and to provide them with more accessible information than is now available. Films can be used to offer students visual impressions which will enhance their knowledge about Japan: I will choose films made in Japan that have historical content. Students need to understand the plots, content, and historical context of such films. As for their assignment, I will require them to write an essay on each film, focusing on one or two particular aspects of the film, and analyzing how they help students understand Japanese history and culture. The selected films will be in two categories, one regarding premodern history, and the other regarding Japan in the dynamic phase from the 1940s to 1960s. Students also will be required to identify a particular theme or scene from the film that presents something different from what they are familiar with, analyze universal and unique aspects of Japanese history and culture, and elaborate on how those factors help them think of Japan in a broader context and from various perspectives.