

Incorporating Japanese studies into the undergraduate curriculum

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Since 2020, the University of North Texas has increased its focus on inclusive curriculum and pedagogy. The university has incorporated diversity and inclusion initiatives in its strategic plan, and one of the aims of this plan is to increase cultural competence. Professors are expected to develop classes that spark curiosity, critical thinking and team building among students, and promote an understanding of cultural context. Internationalizing the curriculum is one way of achieving the goal of cultural competence. The Japan Studies Institute has been an excellent resource to help me think about ways to make my classes more inclusive. My proposal involves infusing Japanese studies into the existing course content in my department, especially in the following classes that I currently teach or that I am likely to teach in future.

Mass Communication and Society: This large survey class is open to all majors in the university and teaches students about media history and the role that various forms of media such as newspapers, TV, radio, digital media, and social media play in our society. I plan to discuss Japanese media in the “Global Media” module. The related assignment in this module will require students to look up web resources to see how the media system operates in Japan, how much freedom journalists enjoy, and how the Japanese media system compares with American media. Students will be asked to write a two-page paper comparing trends in Japanese media with U.S. media.

Race, Gender and the Media: This class is open to students at the sophomore level and upward from all majors across the university. I would like to teach this class in future as it coincides with my research interests on media and representation. I plan to incorporate Japan studies in the module on “Asian representation in the media.” I intend to have students read [background resources](#) from the Stanford Program on International and Cross Cultural Education (SPICE) to get a better idea of the history of Japanese Americans and the stereotypes that exist about them in the media. Students will then be required to do a short research paper examining how this group is depicted in various types of media such as movies, newspapers, advertisements, and social media.

Copyediting: This class is open to journalism majors and minors, and it focuses on the mechanics of news writing, along with grammar, punctuation, and Associated Press Style. I intend to incorporate Japan studies in modules such as photojournalism, caption writing, and social media. Assignments could include comparing news coverage of a particular event in the U.S. and Japanese contexts to understand how culture determines the nature of coverage. Students could examine differences in terms of the sources quoted, and the frames used to tell the story. Students could also compare the work done by photojournalists in U.S. and Japanese contexts, or brainstorm on how to localize a story published in Japan for a U.S. audience.

Study Abroad: After attending JSI, I feel more prepared to co-lead the study abroad program in my department. The institute has given me a foundational knowledge of Japan, which I hope to build on in the coming months to help me become a better guide for students who will visit the country for the first time. I am looking forward to sharing the resources I gathered at JSI with my students so that they have a better idea of Japanese culture and society. Specifically, I am looking forward to

sharing the bibliography and selected reading materials from JSI on basic facts about Japan, Japanese history, politics, culture, religion, art, education, and local customs.

Pedagogy: JSI 2022 featured several distinguished speakers who talked about topics related to their areas of expertise. I learned a lot from these presenters as well as my fellow attendees, and I want to improve my teaching methods and materials by incorporating some of the techniques that I observed during these presentations. The three main takeaways for me are: Exhibit enthusiasm for the subject; use popular culture references, case studies, repetition, and small group exercises to demonstrate the content; and have (lots of) patience and a sense of humor.