

Japan and My Academic Discipline:
How to Stimulate Interest in Japan among Students at SUNY Fredonia
2014 Japan Studies Institute Project Report
Dr. Xin Fan

It is an eye-opening opportunity for me to participate in the 2014 Japan Studies Institute at the San Diego State University. First of all, it is amazing to see how the organizer of the institute Professor Yoshiko Higurashi is able to coordinate scholars, artists, and community members from all over the world and to put together such an informative introduction of Japanese language and culture from a great range of perspectives (arts, history, literature, political economy and so on). I feel that my knowledge about Japan has dramatically increased during the past two weeks. At the same time, the experience of returning to classroom studying with colleagues from various disciplinary backgrounds also helps me understand how knowledge about Japan can be a powerful tool to raise students' awareness in the age of globalization.

After returning to my school, I will apply the knowledge that I have learned at the institute to my teaching. First, I will adopt the more integrated East Asian perspective in my courses on world and regional histories. At the institute, when talking about the circulation of the knowledge about arts, philosophy, and architecture in traditional East Asia, several speakers have mentioned that globalization as a phenomenon has taken place in this cultural region since the ancient times. I agree. In my course on East Asian Civilizations, I will increase the content on the knowledge exchange among East Asian countries and use the development of Japanese writing system as an example to help students in Fredonia understand the on-going process of globalization in the pre-modern world.

Second, I will bring in an interdisciplinary approach in history courses. For example, I will include the discussion on Japanese political economy in my Modern East Asia course. The discussion on Japanese Industrial Policy has inspired a very dynamic discussion at the institute. In my course, I will use the Japanese concept "managed decline" as an example and ask students to compare the roles of state in the economic developments in Japan, South Korea, China, and the United States. I will also use traditional images from Japanese, Chinese and Korean calligraphy and sounds from music to help students develop a deeper appreciation of East Asian art tradition in my East Asian Traditions course.

Third, in the long run, I plan to organize study-abroad programs to bring students in Fredonia to Japan. To this end, the panel discussion on "Developing Academic Partnerships and Other Exchange Opportunities in Japan" was very helpful. As internationalization is one of the strategic goals of my university, the effort will become part of initiatives to globalize SUNY Fredonia campus.