

Larry Gray

Japan Studies Institute

San Diego State University

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Curriculum Development Project (Summary)

As we prepare to return to our home institutions, and to share what we've learned and how we've learned within our variety of disciplines, I will summarize my own plan for the English Department at Jacksonville State University in Alabama, where I teach the following kinds of courses: writing about literature, advanced-level literature surveys, and film.

First, in my more introductory composition courses in writing about literature, I can include poems or short stories translated from Japanese. As instructors, we are already expected to include works of literature from other languages and cultures within our reading assignments, so this incorporation of Japanese literature will come naturally. The JSI experience will further help my students in that all significant writing and all careful reading demand an understanding of context: what new information does the writer of a composition have to offer, and how much context needs to be explained when communicating this information to another reader? Japanese language and culture is usually described as "high context," when compared to American language and culture. Consequently, there may be more of a challenge for everyone involved when we cover works of Japanese literature, but this curriculum development will fit smoothly into my current teaching.

In the case of an advanced survey course in literature, I expect to teach Japanese works in the context of the Non-Western Literature class that we offer every third or fourth semester. Excerpts from the Tale of Genji will be essential to such a course, and I am now more aware of other writers such as Natsume Soseki and Yasunari Kawabata. I may even have the opportunity to offer a course exclusively in Japanese literature within a short term as a way of demonstrating its viability for a full semester offering, depending on interest and enrollment.

Most immediately, I expect to include Japanese studies in my film courses. Two or three months from now, in our fall semester, I will be teaching *The Art of the Film*, and as I've done in the past I will include a work by Yasujiro Ozu--either *Late Spring* or *Tokyo Story*. With my increased though still insufficient understanding of Japanese language and culture, I will be able to help my students understand more of the context in Ozu's films. I have found that these works communicate quite well on their own, as a cinematic experience, but I am learning to appreciate more subtleties, myself, all the time, and hope to enhance my students' understanding as well. My most cherished goal for a new course is one in Japanese cinema more exclusively. As a way to attract students to such a course, I will offer it initially as a Great Masters sort of class, with emphasis on the directors Kurosawa and Ozu as they parallel to some extent the always popular Alfred Hitchcock. These directors toyed with supernatural themes, ambiguity of point of view, family-centered dramas, remakes of their own works, and even semi-documentary styles of cinema, just to name a few points of comparison, and I would really enjoy introducing students to Japanese cinema in this way, by connection with another excellent but more familiar film-maker.