

## **Introduction to Modern Japanese Literature**

### **Course Description:**

This course serves as an introduction to the modern literature of Japan, 1868 to present. Emphasis is placed on the historical developments and trends in modern Japanese answers to the question, *what does literature do?* Specific topics include the Meiji Restoration and Japanese literary encounters with the West, naturalism and the I-novel, literary modernism and postmodernism, the role of literature in politics and the role of politics in literature, a-bomb literature and war memory, and marginalized literatures. All readings and assignments are in English; no Japanese language proficiency is required.

### **Course Goals:**

This course will:

- introduce major authors, works, and themes in modern Japanese literature
- situate major authors and texts of modern Japanese literature within their historical context
- explore various modern theories of what literature does, as well as the impact of those theories on modern Japanese literary history

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to:

- identify and explain the significance of major authors, keywords, and literary schools and trends within modern Japanese literature
- perform a close reading of a literary text
- read academic articles for the main idea
- integrate close reading and secondary research to analyze literary texts in context

### **Course Requirements and Grading:**

#### *1. Participation and Preparation 30%*

Regular attendance and active participation in class are vital to success in the course. Participation can take the form of contributing to in-class discussion as well as completing preparation assignments outside of class. These assignments are meant to help focus the reading and ground the conversation in class.

#### *2. Close Reading Assignment 20%*

A close reading of a text covered in class, in essay or video essay form. Other formats will be considered with instructor permission.

#### *3. Article Analysis Assignment 20%*

Students will read and present an analysis of an academic article or book chapter from the field of modern Japanese literary studies. This can take the form of a written or video essay, or other format with permission.

#### 4. *Final Paper* 30%

The final paper will critically analyze one or more texts from modern Japanese literature (or other literary traditions in comparison with modern Japanese literature). It must cite at least five secondary academic sources and employ close reading as a component of its analysis. Students will submit a preliminary bibliography and proposal for feedback, and may choose to revise material from the close reading and/or article analysis assignments for the final paper.

#### **Sample Course Materials:**

- Santo Kyoden, *Playboy, Grilled Edo Style*
- Higuchi Ichiyo, *Child's Play*
- Futabatei Shimei, *Ukigumo*
- Kunikida Doppo, *Unforgettable People*
- Shiga Naoya, *At Kinosaki*
- Natsume Soseki, *Kokoro*
- Kurosawa Akira, *Rashomon*
- Edogawa Ranpo, *The Human Chair*
- Kobayashi Takiji, *The Crab Cannery Ship*
- Yokomitsu Riichi, *Shanghai*
- Tanizaki Junichiro, *The Key*
- Hara Tamiki, *Summer Flowers*
- Takeda Taijun, *Luminous Moss*
- Mishima Yukio, *Patriotism*
- Oe Kenzaburo, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*
- Yi Yangji, *Koku*
- Medoruma Shun, *Droplets*
- Murakami Haruki, *On Seeing the 100% Perfect Girl One Beautiful April Morning*
- Tawada Yoko, *Where Europe Begins*
- Murata Sayaka, *Convenience Store Woman*
- Oima Yoshitoki, *A Silent Voice*
- Shinkai Makoto, *Your Name*