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JPNS 391 Special Topics: Humor in Japan

Time: Tues./Thurs. 12:30-1:50 pm
Meeting Place: NAC 202
Instructor: Michihiro Ama (michihiro.ama@mso.umt.edu)
Office: LA320
Office Hours: 9:00-9:50 am on Monday; 1:00-1:50 pm on Monday; 9:00-9:50 on Wed; 11:00-11:50 am on Thursday; or by appointment

Course Description
This course explores humor as a mode of communication—expressing humor and perceiving the comical aspect of social life in Japan—and analyzes a wide range of Japanese amusing expressions, including benign humor, wit, irony, and parody with political implications. The course is structured chronologically. We will read a wide range of popular literature, such as monogatari, setsuwa and otogi zōshi, poetry, scripts of kyōgen and rakugo, and a modern Japanese novel. The primary texts are drawn from English translations, although a few poetic examples will be given in the source language.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:
1) Discuss the intent, effects, and risks of humorous expressions in connection with their political, religious and moral implications.
2) Explain theories of humor.
3) Describe the characterization of gender and sexuality in a given historical period of Japan.
4) Discuss stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes related to amusing expressions.
5) Demonstrate knowledge of Japanese syntax, puns and other forms of wordplay, and stylistic operations of humor.

Organization
The class meets twice a week and consists of lectures, discussions, and films.

Course Requirements
Anyone with more than two unexcused absences will have great difficulty in passing the course.
Class Attendance 10%  Grade Scale
3 quizzes (3 x 5%) 15%  A=90-100
1 presentation 5%  B=80-89
3 short response papers 30%  C=70-79
Mid-term 20%  D=60-69
Final exam 20%  F=0-59
100%

Course Texts

Course Reader (Selected Book Chapters and Articles)


SturtzSreetharan, Cindi. “‘Na(a)n ya nen’: Negotiating Language and Identity in the Kansai Region.” Japanese Language and Literature 49, no. 2 (October 2015): 429-452.


Schedule

WK1 (8/28, 8/30): Introduction to the Course, Defining Humor in Japan
Readings: Davis (chapters 1, 6), Hearn (selected chapter)

WK2 (9/4, 9/6): Theories of Humor and Laughter
Readings: Morreall (selected chapters)

WK 3 (9/11, 9/13): Humor in Monogatari in Medieval Japan
Readings: The Tale of the Lady Ochikubo (chapters 1 & 2)
1st Response Papers Due on 9/11 1st Quiz on 9/13

WK 4 (9/18, 9/20): Humor in Medieval poetry and Monogatari—Continued
Readings: *The Tale of the Lady Ochikubo* (chapters 3 & 4)

**WK 5 (9/25, 9/27):** Humor in *Setsuwa* (Explanatory Talk)
Readings: *Tales of Times Now Past* (selected chapters), *A Collection of Tales from Uji* (selected chapters), *Sand and Pebbles* (selected chapters)

**WK 6 (10/2, 10/4):** *Otogi zōshi* (Companion Booklet)
Readings: Skord (selected chapters), Mulhern
2nd Quiz on 10/4

**WK 7 (10/9, 10/11):** *Otogi zōshi* (Companion Booklet)–Continued
Readings: Skord (selected chapters), Mulhern

**WK 8 (10/16, 10/18):** Midterm

**WK 9 (10/23, 10/25):** *Kyōgen*
Film: *This is Kyōgen*
Readings: Davis (chapter 9), Shirane (Parodies, Humorous Stories, pp. 22-7), Berberich Haynes, “Follies and Foibles” from *Twelve Plays of the Noh and Kyōgen Theaters*
2nd Response Papers

**WK 10 (10/30, 11/1):** Parody and Japan’s Short Comic Poetry in the Tokugawa Era
Readings: Davis (chapters 8, 10), Dix, Chance, and Sepp

**WK 11 (11/6---Election Day No Class, 11/8):** Rakugo
Readings: Davis (chapter 7), Morioka and Sasaki (selected chapters)
Film: *Rakugo in English*
3rd Quiz on 11/6

**WK 12 (11/13, 11/15):** Comic Fiction
Readings: *Shanks’ Mare*, Davis (chapter 2), SturtzSreetharan

**WK 13 (11/20, 11/22---Thanksgiving, No Class) Comic Fiction–Continued
Readings: *Shanks’ Mare*

**WK 14 (11/27, 11/29):** Humorous Sensibility in Modern Japanese literature
Readings: *Botchan*
Attendance & Participation
Attendance is mandatory as class participation is a vital part of language acquisition and affects the students’ grades. They can improve their participation and make the class more interesting by coming to class prepared; interacting with the instructor and classmates in Japanese; and asking questions, commenting on discussion topics, and volunteering answers and sharing ideas in group activities. Student attendance will be noted at the beginning of each class. Anyone with more than three unexcused absences will have great difficulty in passing the course. Late arrival to class will be counted as 1/2 an absence. Early departure from class will be counted as one-day absence. To keep up to date, it is highly recommended that students keep in contact with their classmates when they miss the handouts and information given on a class day.

Moodle
Students are responsible for obtaining updated course information by checking Moodle. Please log in at https://login.umt.edu/idp/profile/cas/login?execution=e1s1 and visit “Moodle 101 for Students” for tutorial instruction.

Grading Policy
Grading
The following is used as a guideline. Final grades will be adjusted taking into consideration the grade curve (the distribution of all the students’ grade points).

A+ = 97-100,  A = 93-96,  A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89,  B = 83-86,  B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79,  C = 73-76,  C- = 70-72
D = 60-69
F = Below 60

- If a student drops the course, s/he is responsible for the paperwork. Otherwise, the student will receive an F as the final grade. If a student wishes to change grade option, s/he must register this request. See Official Dates and Deadlines for Autumn Semester 2018. Changing the status after the official dates and deadlines is NOT permitted.
- Incomplete grades will NOT be granted, unless the student has progressed satisfactory
but incidents beyond the student’s control prevent him/her from pursuing the goal.

- When long absences and emergencies are expected, consult with the instructor immediately. *Do NOT wait until the incident is over.*
- *Make-up tests will NOT be permitted* unless the student has a legitimate excuse and contacts the instructor 12 hours prior to a quiz/exam day. However, it will be left to the instructor’s discretion as to whether or not a make-up is granted.
- Students are required to maintain all of their work, including tests, quizzes, homework, and artifacts, which may include business cards, a video recording of a presentation, business letters, etc.

**Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to follow ethical standards such as integrity and honesty in preparing and presenting materials that demonstrate their level of knowledge and that is used to determine their grades. When an act of academic dishonesty is detected, the instructor is obliged to speak to the student and report it to the Department. For more detailed information, see the section V Academic Conduct in the University of Montana Student Conduct Code (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

**Student Service Policies**

- **Emergency Procedures:** In case of an emergency evacuation, students will take all their personal belongings and move to a safe area outside the building.
- **Disability Accommodations:** “Students with disabilities, faculty, and Disability Services for Students have rights and responsibilities related to reasonable modifications. Collaborative efforts among these three parties ensure equal access.”
  “Faculty expects the student to initiate modification requests and provides reasonable modifications to ensure equal access. Faculty also refers students to Disability Services when necessary and refrains from retaliation against individuals advocating for accessibility.” (Cited from http://www.umt.edu/dss/Faculty/default.php)
  It is highly recommended that students with certified disabilities make a specific request to the instructor at least one week prior to the particular need.
- **Disruptive and Improper Behavior:** Cell phones must be turned off when a class is in session. No chewing of gum or eating in class is allowed. The dress code should be in accord with the learning place.