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ENG 3907-001: Asian Literature

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Course Objectives: This course offers an in-depth study of Japanese literature in translation. We will spend the semester examining the canonical works of fiction from early modern Japanese literary traditions to contemporary works with a postmodern sensibility. Our main task is to explore both traditional and contemporary concepts of Japanese identity and aesthetics in their respective cultural and historical contexts. We will also read one novel by a non-Japanese author, so that we can consider a Western portrayal of beauty and identity as it concerns Japanese women. Our goal is to gain a variety of perspectives on what is Japanese and their ideas on the meaning of human life, the essence of beauty and the definitions of love, especially as these notions shift in a modern Japanese society under the influence of the West.

Texts:
Goossen, Theodore, *The Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories*
Kawabata, Yasunari, *Snow Country*
Keene, Donald, *Modern Japanese Literature: from 1868 to the Present Day*
Murakami, Haruki, *Norwegian Wood*
Tanizaki, Junichiro, *In Praise of Shadows*
Yoshimoto, Banana, *Asleep*
Xeroxed handouts and electronic resources

Policies:
* You are expected to attend all classes. If you miss more than 4 classes, I will lower your final grade by a letter. If you miss 6 or more classes, you will either drop the course or accept an F for the semester. As outlined in the student catalogue, I will consider an absence excused only for "reasons of illness, emergency, or university activity." For each case, you must show me an appropriate document to verify your absence.

* I will give unscheduled reading quizzes frequently to make sure you keep up with the assignment. They are meant to be easy if you do the reading. These quizzes and in-class writing assignments must be turned in by the end of class, and cannot be made up at a later date; that is the reward for attending class regularly.

* I expect you to arrive ready to participate in discussion. The quality as well as the frequency of your contributions determine a significant portion of your participation grade.

* If you are absent, you are still responsible for knowing the material, completing all of the readings and turning in any assignments for that day. I recommend getting several classmates' phone numbers and email addresses so that you can keep up. Do not email me to ask for an "update" on missed assignments. Instead, I ask that you stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment so that we can talk.
* Latecomers (who arrive after 10 minutes) will receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I can mark their attendance. Every 3 instances of tardiness will count as 1 absence. Leaving the class early will be treated in the same manner.

* Assignments must be handed in within the first 10 minutes of class on the day they are due unless we have worked out a prior arrangement. Work handed in after that time will lose one letter grade for each class period it is late. Any work turned in a week past the deadline will receive a zero. I will not accept assignments via email. You must bring a hard copy of each assignment.

* All assignments must be typed and printed in black ink, using 12-point Times New Roman font and 1 inch margins. Remember to include page numbers and staple your paper in the upper left-hand corner. When citing secondary sources, use the MLA style of documentation. You are responsible for saving copies of any work turned in for grading.

* You are responsible for information given in class, including key terms, ideas and facts during both lectures and discussions. **Make sure to take good notes!** They will come in handy when preparing for midterm and final exams.

* Cell phones must be turned off before coming to class and kept out of sight in our classroom at all times.

**Grading:**
Professionalism (attendance, active preparation, participation and cooperation): 15%
Quizzes and in-class writing assignments: 10%
Presentation and leading class discussion: 10%
Midterm exam: 15%
Short essay: 10%
Long essay: 15%
Final exam: 25%

To calculate semester grades, I use numbers rather than letters. These will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 61-70=D. We may add, cancel, or revise some assignments. In that case, percentage totals may be adjusted also.

**Note:** I do not keep a running tally of your current grade from day to day, so please don't ask. **You should keep your own record of your participation and all of your assignments.**

**Professionalism:** Your attendance is crucial, as is participating in the discussions and bringing your contributions to the class. If you remain silent every class of the semester, expect a lower grade. Similarly, if you habitually arrive late or leave early, or if you cannot conduct yourself in a respectable manner, expect a lower professionalism grade.

**Presentation:** I will assign these presentations early in the semester. From your assigned reading, choose a passage that you find especially important or intriguing. You are free to do outside research to obtain background information on historical events, tradition and culture of the society the text portrays; but of course, your presentation has to be more than just background information.

Most importantly, **your presentation shouldn't be just a summary of the text.** It is not enough to have a vague sense of the plot or a certain character.
Your main task is to analyze the significance of that passage critically, as opposed to responding to it personally and emotionally. You must present an interpretation of the passage beyond its surface-meaning: you should explain your interpretation by discussing imagery, symbolism, point of view, character development, setting, theme, etc.

Your presentation can explore topics about the passage, such as: What key issues does it raise? Does it shed light on any hidden attributes or qualities of a character? In what ways does it deepen our understanding of a specific theme in the story? How do the cultural assumptions inside the story differ from or are similar to your own? How does the passage help you understand the story as a whole, its world and tradition?

In addition to presenting your critical response, you must prepare several analysis questions (inspired by the passage you have worked on) for the class to discuss following your presentation.

In order to keep your presentation focused, choose just one passage to analyze. During the class discussion, however, if you want to explain the context, you can refer to the other parts of the book.

Your presentation should be about 15 minutes.

The type-written part of your presentation must consist of the passage you analyzed, your discussion questions, plus 2 pages of your critical response. You will turn this in to me on the day of your presentation.

**Essays:** First, you will write a short essay (3-4 pages) in which outside research is optional. For the long essay assignment, you will analyze a theme or motif found in our reading(s), utilizing outside research, and make an intelligent argument/response in 5-6 pages of polished prose. More specific guidelines will follow.

**Electronic Writing Portfolio:** This is a writing intensive course. If you wish to use your assignment for EWP, you need to speak with me at least two weeks before the last class day.

**Midterm and final exams:** The exams will test your knowledge of readings and discussion topics covered during the first half and the second half of the course through identification, short answer, and essay question formats.

**Note:** I reserve the right to alter or revise class policies and requirements for the course.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. I will follow the English Department policy on plagiarism:

“Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s own original work’ (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of “F” for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.”

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
# Course Calendar

This is a tentative schedule, which will evolve as the class progresses. Changes will be announced in class, so stay tuned! The date on the calendar is the date the readings are DUE to be discussed in class.

## Week 1
- **M Jan 12**: Introduction
- **W Jan 14**: *In Praise of Shadows*
- **F Jan 16**: *In Praise of Shadows*  
  Last day to ADD courses

## Week 2
- **M Jan 19**: No class; M. L. King's Birthday
- **W Jan 21**: *In Praise of Shadows*; “The Firefly Hunt” from *Modern Japanese Literature* (MJL)
- **F Jan 23**: “The Izu Dancer” from *The Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories* (OBJSS)

## Week 3
- **M Jan 26**: “The Izu Dancer”  
  Last day to DROP a course with No Grade/No Charge
- **W Jan 28**: *Snow Country* (introduction, part one)
- **F Jan 30**: *Snow Country* (part one)

## Week 4
- **M Feb 2**: *Snow Country* (part two)
- **W Feb 4**: *Snow Country* (part two)
- **F Feb 6**: *Snow Country* (overall reflection)

## Week 5
- **M Feb 9**: Short essay, first draft due (peer review)  
  Last day to Withdraw
- **W Feb 11**: Final draft due; *Memoirs of a Geisha* (translator's note, chapters 1-5)
- **F Feb 13**: No class; Lincoln's Birthday

## Week 6
- **M Feb 16**: No class
- **W Feb 18**: *Memoirs of a Geisha* (chapters 6-11)
- **F Feb 20**: *Memoirs of a Geisha* (chapters 12-17)

## Week 7
- **M Feb 23**: *Memoirs of a Geisha* (chapters 18-23)
- **W Feb 25**: *Memoirs of a Geisha* (chapters 24-29)
- **F Feb 27**: *Memoirs of a Geisha* (chapters 30-35)

## Week 8
- **M Mar 2**: *Memoirs of a Geisha* (overall reflection)
- **W Mar 4**: Mid-Term
- **F Mar 6**: Film (*Memoirs of a Geisha*, 145 minutes)
Week 9
M Mar 9: Go over mid-term; film
W Mar 11: Film
F Mar 13: Film; discussion

Week 10
M Mar 16: No class; Spring Break
W Mar 18: No class; Spring Break
F Mar 20: No class; Spring Break

Week 11
M Mar 23: “Portrait of an Old Geisha” (OBJSS)
W Mar 25: “The Accordion and the Fish Town” (OBJSS)
F Mar 27: “Villon's Wife” (MJL); “Merry Christmas” (OBJSS)

Week 12
M Mar 30: “In the Forest, Under Cherries in Full Bloom” (OBJSS)
W Apr 1: Long essay, first draft due (peer review)
F Apr 3: Final draft due; “Hell Screen” (MJL) Last day to withdraw with W

Week 13
M Apr 6: “The Elephant Vanishes” (OBJSS)
W Apr 8: Norwegian Wood (sections 1-4)
F Apr 10: Norwegian Wood (section 5-6)

Week 14
M Apr 13: Norwegian Wood (section 6)
W Apr 15: Norwegian Wood (sections 7-9)
F Apr 17: Norwegian Wood (sections 10-11)

Week 15
M Apr 20: Norwegian Wood (overall reflection)
W Apr 22: “Dreaming of Kimchee” (OBJSS)
F Apr 24: “Night and Night's Travelers” from Asleep

Week 16
M Apr 27: “Love Songs” from Asleep
W Apr 29: “Asleep” from Asleep
F May 1: Last class day