

Final Project, AASCU National Faculty Development Institute 2006

Incorporating Japanese Studies into Three English Courses

The Institute this year has given me resources to design three new courses for my department within the next few semesters, as well as ideas and materials that I will be able to use for my own research as well as for further course units and lesson plans. My final presentation focuses on one of these three courses, a version of EG 596, Studies in Literary Traditions (a rotating-topics course offered regularly in my department). This course is titled “Demons, Replicants, Ghosts, and Dolls: The Almost-Human in Britain and Japan,” and it examines both British and Japanese literary and cultural texts (including woodblock prints, anime, and manga) that deal with the almost-human Other. Thanks to the Institute’s speakers, research session, and background readings, I have collected both primary and secondary materials for this course, including critical/historical essays for each week of the semester. I will be ready to teach this version of EG 596 in the Fall 2007 semester, after I return to campus from a leave of absence.

The second course that the Institute has allowed me to imagine is one that I hope to teach as early as the Summer 2007 session; it will be a three-week, 500-level class considering the image of the samurai on film and in other forms of popular culture. Background reading for the students will come from cultural histories of Japan and studies of Japanese popular culture, as well as recent work on Japanese cinema by David Desser, Keiko I. McDonald, and others, and a textbook introducing techniques of film interpretation and analysis. The first week of this course will deal with the quintessential samurai film for Western viewers, Kurosawa’s *Shichinin no samurai* (1950); in this week, I will also show director John Sturges’s 1960 “rewriting” of *Shichinin no samurai*, *The Magnificent Seven*, and episodes from the recent anime series that also revisits Kurosawa’s film, *Samurai 7*. The second week of the course will examine Inagaki’s 1954 trilogy *Miyamoto Musashi* and the figure of Musashi as it has been reinscribed by mangaka, business trainers, and anime artists. The final week of the course will cover Western film genres’ appropriations of the image of the samurai, including Jean-Pierre Melville’s 1967 *Le samourai*, John Frankenheimer’s 1998 *Ronin*, and Edward Zwick’s 2003 *The Last Samurai*. Students will write a paper each week, and the course will end with research presentations by students on other samurai-related films of their choosing.

The third course I envision will require more research to prepare, but it is the closest of the three to my heart. This course will combine my specialty area of 18th- and 19th-century British culture and literature with my new interest in Japan, to examine the rise of the merchant classes in both nations. First, I would like to compare the development of distinctively urban artistic and literary forms in Tokugawa Japan and 18th-century England, with an eye to understanding how these new arts reflect the economic, social, and cultural changes that both nations were undergoing. The second part of this course would compare the literature, art, and cultural contexts of Meiji Japan and Victorian England, including some examination of the historical contact between the two nations in the last third of the nineteenth century.

Thanks to the 2006 JSI, I have a much better understanding of both the primary and secondary materials that these three courses will need to include, and I feel much more confident than I did before the Institute that I can speak reasonably accurately and sensitively about Japanese culture. The speakers, activities, and above all the language teaching at the JSI gave me even more than I expected from the program, and I look forward to seeing how my thinking and my teaching about Japan will continue to develop, now that the Institute is over.

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