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Final Project Summary: Special Topics Course on National Identity of Japan

My final project is the outline of a proposal for a three credit hour course to be taught at the 400/500 level, including upper level undergraduates and graduate students.

The course will explore the idea of Japan as constructed in Literature and Film since 1945. Consideration will be given to Japanese constructions of its own identity as well as American constructions of Japanese identity. Students will be asked to compare representations of Japan in Japanese literature and film to representations of Japan in American literature and film. They will also be challenged to evaluate their own preconceptions about Japan and Japanese culture. The course will be useful to students of contemporary literature, students interested in film, and students who have an interest in Japan itself. Theoretical questions raised in the course will include the following:

How is national identity (of Japan or any other country) constructed in literature and film?

How do representations of national identity in literature and film affect a nation's idea of itself?

How do representations of national identity in literature and film affect a nation's position in the world?

In proposing the course, I will seek the following designations: International, Multi-cultural, and (possibly) Theory Intensive. Because the course includes novel subject-matter while at the same time fulfilling several requirements for Liberal Arts students in general and English majors in particular, I expect it to be a popular course.