Over the past 160 years, the United States and Japan have been trading partners, political allies, and, for a brief period, wartime enemies. This course explores how the culture, politics, and economies of both societies were shaped and conditioned by sustained mutual interaction. Texts under discussion will include film, diaries, travelogues, manga (and cartoons), literature, and musical performances. There will be one field trip to view the manga collection at the Ohio State University.

**Required Texts:**
  - [Note full text is available on-line through OBIS.]

**Recommended Text:**  

The required and recommended texts are available for purchase at the Oberlin Bookstore and on short-term reserve loan at Mudd Library. All other readings are available on Blackboard (Bb).

**COURSE GOALS:**
This seminar is designed to examine main themes in the history of U.S.-Japan relations, both formal and informal. Understanding how these two nations have fluctuated pendulum-like between mutual fascination and mutual antagonism over the past 160 years provides a window into understanding how robust conceptions of national identity have global implications. While history is the dominant discipline guiding inquiry in the seminar, students will also be encouraged to think across disciplinary boundaries and engage in critical interpretation of fiction, film, and manga.

More broadly, the seminar is designed to provide students with a toolbox of foundational skills for college-level work in the social sciences and humanities. Skills related to reading—What are good note-taking practices? What is an argument and how should it be assessed? Do I have to read every word?—represent one important axis of inquiry. Skills related to writing—How do I find library materials on my chosen topic? Should I
make an outline? Where does the thesis go, and what is a thesis? How can I write good sentences?—represent a second main axis. Most of all, students will be encouraged to practice writing and writing and writing to acquire familiarity and comfort with expressing ideas on a page. For, as a character in novelist Murakami Haruki’s novel, IQ84 notes: “Writers have to keep on writing if they want to mature, like caterpillars endlessly chewing on leaves.”

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY:
The course grade will be based on the following:

- Attendance/Participation: 25%
- Short papers (Two @ 1,400 words each): 20% each
- Weekly written assignments (500 words): 25%
- Individual presentation on reading: 10%

All grading is based on the following scale: A+ 100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 69-65. A grade below 65 is a failing grade.

Note: Failure to submit any single written assignment for the class will result in a failing final grade and no credit will be granted.

EXPECTATIONS:
Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory and absences will be recorded. (In the case of personal or family emergency, students should contact me to make arrangements for completing missed work.) Additionally, students are expected to be ready to begin promptly at 2:30pm for each class meeting.

Participation: This is a discussion-based course and engaged participation by students is required. That is, the most basic expectation is that students complete all assigned readings and come prepared to discuss. Even one student’s failure to complete the readings impacts the learning of the class as a whole. Be responsible for both your own and your fellow students’ learning. Together, you can ensure that all class time is spent in a productive discussion of ideas—an endeavor dependent on the timely and thorough completion of all readings by all.

Timely Completion of Assigned Work: Assignments are due on (or before) the noted due date. Only one extension will be granted per semester and must be requested during office hours at least two days before the due date of the paper. (Note: Requests for extensions may not be granted in all cases. Extensions will never be granted for reasons of workload or insufficient advance planning.) Late assignments will be reduced by one grade step per day. A paper due on Monday Oct. 6 which is turned in on Oct. 7, for example, will get a “B-” rather than the “B” it merited. A “B” paper turned in on Oct. 8 will earn a “C+”, etc.

Honor Code: Students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments, concluding each with the handwritten pledge: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment.” Infractions of the Honor Code will be referred to the College Honor Committee. Please come and see me with any questions regarding the citation of sources and proper
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Attribution of information. For more information on the Oberlin Honor Code, please refer to the “Student Policies” section of the Oberlin College website.

**Papers:** The first paper will be due on **Monday, Oct. 6 in-class.** Note: a rough draft, which will be work-shopped by peers, will be due in class on Tues. Oct. 1. The second will be due on **Wednesday, Dec. 3 in-class,** with a rough draft for peer review due in class on Tues. Nov. 26. All final paper submissions must be sent by e-mail, in Word or PDF format.

**Writing Associate:** Logan McMillen [lmcmille@oberlin.edu](mailto:lmcmille@oberlin.edu) will serve as the writing associate for the seminar. Students are encouraged to work closely with him in all aspects of the paper-writing process. One-on-one meetings between the WA and students are an integral aspect of the tutorial process and will help advance each student’s individual goals as to be formulated at the start of the semester. For additional assistance, students are encouraged to use the Drop-In Writing Center located in Mudd 101A (the Academic Commons.)

**Weekly Assignments:** Seminar members will be required to complete at least 5 short assignments, as listed under each week’s readings. At least 2 of these must be completed before the fall recess. The written response associated with these assignments should be at least (and no more than) 500 words. Deadline for e-mail submission: 9am on Wednesdays.

**Individual Presentation of Readings:** Each student will be responsible for leading discussion of a week’s readings at least once during the semester. The expectation is for a 10-15 minute summary of main points, themes, and questions raised by the readings. The presenter is thus responsible for getting class discussion started and also for assuming the role of moderator in directing fellow students’ comments and questions throughout the discussion period.

**In-Class Contributions:** In certain weeks, students will be asked to present a map or image related to the week’s reading, to focus in groups on specific passages from a given reading, and/or to perform a short writing exercise in class. All such exercises will presume timely completion of that week’s readings, so come prepared!

**Film Screenings:** Three films will be shown during the course of the semester in Wilder 101. The first, “**Sayonara**” (1957) by Director Joshua Logan will be screened on **Tues., Oct. 14 at 7pm.** The second film, “**Lost in Translation**” (Dir. Sophia Coppola, 2003) will be screened on **Wed., Dec. 3 at 7pm.** Films will be discussed during lecture in conjunction with the week’s readings. We will also be watching selections of Director Cecil B. DeMille’s silent film, **The Cheat** (1915) in week 4.

**Laptop/Tablet Policy:** In the interest of promoting engaged conversations with one’s peers, students are asked not to use laptops and tablets during class-time. Please be certain to bring hard copies of all readings to class.
Accommodations for Disabilities: Students requiring accommodation for a disability must present a note from Jane Boomer (Director, Office of Disability Services, Peters Hall G-27, Jane.Boomer@oberlin.edu; Tel. 440-775-5588) by Wed. Sept. 10. The note should include a detailed description of the type of accommodation required.

Personal Pronouns: Students with preferences in this regard should e-mail me at the start of the semester.

Office Hours: Students are encouraged to see me with questions about any aspect of the course:
Wed. 4 – 5:30pm and Fri. 12noon – 1:30pm
Rice Hall, Room 308
Phone: 5-6708 E-mail: Emer.ODwyer@oberlin.edu

I. First Encounters

Week 1: Introductions
Sept. 3 (Wed.) Introductions; How to Read in College


Week 2: Mid-Nineteenth Century Encounters
Sept. 8 (Mon.) Whale Ships and Castaways


Sept. 10 (Wed.) Black Ships and Forced Amity


Assignment: Look through the essays and images presented on the “Black Ships and Samurai” website (of the MIT Visualizing Cultures project.) (Bb)
Write a journal entry considering the manner in which the Japanese and Americans perceived each other during first encounters.
Week 3: Learning to Understand Each Other, Part 1

Sept. 15 (Mon.) Mutual Fascinations


Rediscovering America:
- pp. 32-37 Uchimura Kanzō, “First Impressions of Christendom” (1893)
- pp. 50-57 Katayama Sen, “Advice on Going to America” (1901)

Sept. 17 (Wed.) Meet at the Allen Art Museum

Assignment: Find a travelogue in Mudd written by an American who visited Japan before 1905 and write a reflection on the observations therein. You do not need to read the travelogue in its entirety. Instead, identify select passages that help you get a sense for the author’s own background and how that shapes what he/she chooses to comment upon while traveling in Japan. Are there other factors, too, besides personal background that help explain why your author makes the comments he/she does?

II. Internationalism and Unease

Week 4: The Yellow Peril

Sept. 22 (Mon.) Integration [Note: Please bring laptop to class.]


Film: The Cheat (Director: Cecil B. DeMille, 1915) [Selections]

Sept. 24 (Wed.) Exclusion

Rediscovering America:
- pp. 69-76. Sasaki Shigetsu, “Excluded Japanese and Exclusionist Americans” (1920)


Assignment: Choose one of the following:
#1: Take a look at some of the anti-Japanese propaganda propagated during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and featured on MIT’s Visualizing Asia website. (Bb)
Write a journal entry comparing and contrasting the Russo-Japanese War-era “yellow peril” and that of the 1920s.

#2: Use the online Readers’ Guide Retrospective to find magazine articles and opinion pieces discussing the exclusionary acts passed by Congress in the 1920s. Choose two authors with opposing viewpoints and identify what are, in your opinion, the most compelling parts of his/her argument, as well as the least compelling parts.

**Week 5: Americanism in Vogue & Writing Workshop**

Sept. 29 (Mon.) Writing Workshop for Paper #1: Rough Draft due in-class.

*Rediscovering America:*
- pp. 87-92. Introduction to Ch. 3: “Modan America”
- pp. 96-104. Maida Minoru, “The Characteristics and Peculiarities of the Americans” (1925)

Oct. 1 (Wed.) **Meet at Mudd, 4th floor:** Library/Archive research session with Librarian Jennifer Starkey and College Archivist Ken Grossi

### III. War and Occupation

**Week 6: War**

Oct. 6 (Mon.) Paper #1 Due in-class


Oct. 8 (Wed.) Mutual Antagonisms

*Rediscovering America:*
- pp. 128-33. Introduction to Ch. 4: “The American Enemy”
- pp. 160-64. Nakano Gorō, “The Will to Annihilate the American Enemy” (1943)

Week 7: Peace, or Learning to Understand Each Other, Part 2: America Speaks

*Oct. 13 (Mon.)*  Total Defeat and Occupation

Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, W.W. Norton, 1999. Ch. 2 (pp. 65-84); Ch. 14 (405-440).

Oct. 15 (Wed.)  Re-establishing Old Ties


*Reminder: Screening of “Sayonara” (1957) by Dir. Joshua Logan at 7pm on Tuesday, Oct. 14.*

**Assignment:**
Examine the Oberlin Archives for information about one or more of the Japanese or Japanese-American students who matriculated at Oberlin before December 1941. What details can you find about the student’s family background, course schedule, and extracurricular interests at Oberlin? Write a journal entry introducing the student and his/her times. For an introduction to the history of Japanese-American internees who became Oberlin students, see the Fall 2013 issue of the Oberlin Alumni Magazine.

**Fall Recess**

Week 8: Peace, or Learning to Understand Each Other, Part 2: Japan Speaks

Oct. 27 (Mon.)  The Occupied


**Rediscovering America:**
- pp. 181-85. Introduction to Ch. 5: “The American Occupiers”

Oct. 29 (Wed.)  New Balances of Power


**Rediscovering America:**
- pp. 208-14. Symposium, “What We Have Gained from America, and What We Have Lost” (1952)
Assignment: Choose one of the following:

#1: Compile at least three editorials from U.S. newspapers, or magazines commenting on the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945-52. Write a journal entry summarizing the arguments in each and critically evaluating the viewpoints and assumptions made by their authors.

#2: Draw two political cartoons: the first, from the point of view of an American citizen who disagrees with one or more of Occupation policies; the second, from the point of a Japanese citizen who is critical of Occupation policies.

**Week 9: Remembering the War**

Nov. 3 (Mon.)  WWII and Public Memory


Nov. 5 (Wed.)  The A-Bomb as History

*Rediscovering America:*

○ pp. 269-75. Ōe Kenzaburō, “Dealing with Pearl Harbor” (1967)


Assignment:

What was the controversy (or controversies) at the heart of the Smithsonian Enola Gay Controversy? What arguments ultimately matter most (patriotism, moral considerations, etc.) in remembering the particular historical event of Hiroshima? Do public memorials of the first use of an atomic bomb against a civilian population stand apart from constructions of historical memory for other wartime events?

**IV. Postwar Art and Society**

**Week 10: Manga!**

Nov. 10 (Mon.)  Manga’s Global Appeal

Nov. 12 (Wed.)  No class. Prepare for Saturday trip (11/15) to Ohio State Manga collection, Columbus, OH


V. Postwar Commerce and Politics

Week 11: America in Japan, Japan in America
Nov. 17 (Mon.) The World’s Two Largest Economies

Rediscovering America:

Nov. 19 (Wed.) A New Yellow Peril?


Week 12: Writing Workshop
Nov. 24 (Mon.) Writing Workshop for Paper #2: Rough Draft due in-class.
Nov. 26 (Wed.) No Class: Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 13: Tokyo, NY
Dec. 1 (Mon.) What’s distinctive about metropolises today?


*Dec. 3 (Wed.) Paper #2 Due in-class


Assignment:
Using the Readers’ Guide Retrospective, locate a piece of Japanese culture (broadly conceived) and trace how it became familiarized into American culture. Examples: sushi, shoji screens, karaoke, miso soup, kombucha (tea) or green tea.

Week 14: The Bilateral Partnership Today
Dec. 8 (Mon.) America’s Asia?


Dec. 10 (Wed.) Writing Skills Review and Concluding Thoughts

Assignment: Choose one of the following:
#1: Find a newspaper or magazine article discussing the current state (i.e. fall 2014−) of the U.S.-Japan relationship. How have the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the triple disaster at Fukushima of March 2011 added new dimensions to the U.S.-Japan alliance as described by Sheila Smith, circa summer 2001? Discuss in a journal entry.

#2: What do you judge to be the one or two defining tensions in the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship in 2014? How might the tension(s) be eased (or exacerbated)? Discuss in a journal entry.