

JAS231-W Preserving Local Folk Culture (PBL) (2008 curriculum 3 credits)

Year: 2013
Semester: Winter
Meeting-time/day:
Office:
Office Hours:
E-mail:
Website:

Course Description:

PBL was originally developed and is being widely implemented in Medical School programs where students need to 1) learn hands-on knowledge to diagnose patients' diseases, and 2) acquire the skills required to implement appropriate treatments for the disease. Those students are typically given a problem(s) and/or symptoms by an instructor. Students are first expected to consider the extent of their prior knowledge about the problem(s) – and to decide what further data are required in order to tackle the problem(s). Then, students are required to come up with answers (diagnosis and treatments) through further data collection and a series of intensive discussions with group members.

In addition to natural science and social science programs, PBL has also been applied to various liberal arts undergraduate programs in the US, Canada, Korea, and many other countries. There are some important principles to PBL: 1) PBL is carried out by a group which consists of both Japanese and international students, 2) a faculty member assigns the group a real problem relevant to the particular community or communities under consideration, 3) students examine the extent of their prior knowledge with regard to the problem - and decide what further data are required in order to tackle the problem(s), 4) students take the initiative in proceeding on the PBL, 5) students are expected to find an answer/ make suggestions about the problem, 6) faculty members play a role as facilitators in PBL, 7) students are assigned various tasks within the group and these tasks are rotated between group members, and 8) students are expected to report their findings to the community in question.

Objectives:

Several expected outcomes of PBL are to enhance students' 1) English communication/negotiation skills, 2) integration capacity through applying theories/ concepts they have learned heretofore to a particular problem, 3) coordination skills to integrate various opinions to find an answer/solutions, 4) team work spirit, and 5) leadership.

This course is being offered as a way to allow both international and Japanese students to work together on a variety of social, political, and economic issues surrounding the survival and revival of traditional folk practices in rural Japan. Specifically, it is an investigation of the dynamics of certain aspects of Japanese of the Japanese folk revival in the Yuwa Valley region of Akita.

This is an important matter, in that as regions in Japan – indeed in the world as a whole – begin to look away from the nationalistic model of culture which dominated in the Twentieth Century, the

importance of local culture identity has begun to rise in import. With that rise, has come the debate of control and signification which concerns us in this project, and in it we add to the work of the handful of academics working to understand the divisions which beset the preservation of traditional culture.

This form of art, in the process of being (re)defined and shaped at the moment as living art forms – not simply tourist relics – is socially coded through very specific regional as well as cultural conditions and representative of its locale's contribution to the Japanese regional identity as a whole. The Yamahage have been influenced by larger and better established traditions (both regional and national) which have provided ritualistic, thematic and structural frameworks, from which the local community in Yuuwa have been able to construct locally important social meaning. However, in this process of appropriation and adaptation, these traditions themselves have become the property of the region and a living example of the debate which currently exists in Yuuwa as to how this small, farming community debates with its own past and the way that past might influence its future.

Over the course of the program, student will:

- Develop an understanding of some of the more important aspects of folklore studies.
- Be able to identify the key events in the development of the Folk Revival in Akita.
- Recognize how different Agents of Revival support cultural properties for very specific reasons.
- Recognize the unique and cultural properties which are to be found in Japan.
- Appreciate the Yamahage as specific cultural properties.
- Understand the nature and purpose of no-elite culture in both a local and global context.
- Improving intercultural communication and negotiation skills.
- Acquiring practical analytical skills for understanding complex cultural issues.
- Developing positive team-work skills, and working towards understanding the diverse opinions of such groups.

Expected Academic Background:

Please note: Though this is a group based course which examines and makes suggestions about the importance/place of traditional culture in a modern society, students should be aware this is not formed as a way to dictate the terms of the revival to those who 'live it' every day. Our goal is to provide an outsider's perspective, and our invitation to the communities of Yuwa is not an invitation to criticize, condemn or offer unwarranted advise.

Textbook:

NA

Reference Books/Other Study Materials:

NA

Assessment:

100% Project based

Policies & Remarks:

100% attendance is required.

Nothing less than a perfect record will be accepted, as your work affects the whole group.

Class Schedule:

Week 1:

<Week: One > What is Folk Studies?

Anthropology and the Folklore Movements of the 19th Century

- Introducing the subject of Folk and Revival Studies from a comparative point of view and discussing some of the important first cases with the class (Cecil Sharp, the Esperance Movement, American Folk Society, Bavarian Cultural Circle, etc.).

? Assigning the Project - “What steps can, and should be taken - if any - to ensure that the local communities of Yuwa are supported in their desire to preserve, or remove their traditional 'Yamahage' performance traditions?”

? Plus and evening visit to observe a Yamahage Event.

Week 2:

The beginning of Japanese Folk Studies

- Students will examine the life and work of Japan's professional folklorists - the men and women who lead the modern Japanese Folk Revival Movement and the people who laid down important guidelines which have become central to both academic and political attitudes to non-elite culture.

Week 3:

The preservation of Folk Tales in Japan

- This week we will be assessing the data gather so far, and considering the questions which could/should be asked to the informants in the field. it will be an opportunity for students to refine their data sets, and agree on the scope of the final project.

- An opportunity will also be available to consult with the staff and faculty attached to CRESI, which has great experience in the study of folk cultural properties.

Week 4:

Shinzan Shrine and the Namahage

- This week we further discuss the impact that tourism and public awareness has had on the folk identity. Following on from the legislation of the post-war period, Japanese regions have become eager to exploit their cultural heritage to attract tourist money. This is both good and bad.

? Discussion “The Cost of Making money”

Week 5:

Japanese Academic Cultural Preservation Movements

- This week the members of the group's textual research team will discuss the first scholarly cultural preservation movements and the way in which the ‘elite of Japan’ attempted to wrest control of the folk identity from the people to whom it had belonged for centuries.

? Discussion “Unfit Parents”.

Week 6:

Folk Culture and the Law 2

The Death and Rebirth of the Yamahage.

- This week the group will be discussing the final form of their project and preparing for the

presentation to the community.

Week 7:

Final Presentations

- The AIU Yamahage will visit various locales around Campus (perhaps even demanding that lazy faculty be stripped of their titles and skin) Before presenting their findings to our guests from Yuwa.