

MLC210 Comparative Culture

1st and 2nd quarters, Sophomore

Instructor	IMAI YUKO
Style of Class	Lecture
Number of Credits	2
Day and Period	Thursday, period 3

Course Description

In this course, we will learn about the trajectory of cultural exchanges around craft products (especially ceramic and lacquerware) that developed between Japan and Europe from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. While Japanese have many opportunities to use ceramic and lacquer tableware in their everyday lives, relatively few are well-versed enough to discuss their raw materials or manufacturing processes in any detail, and misunderstandings abound. In addition, the development of many craft products that tend to be thought of as uniquely Japanese have also in fact largely been influenced through exchanges with China and the Korean peninsula.

In these lectures, we will acquire a basic familiarity with the history of Japanese crafts developed primarily under the influence of China and the Korean peninsula, as well as the raw materials and manufacturing processes involved in craft products typical of Japan. In addition, we will learn about the transformations undergone by the European cultures that received Japanese craft products in the wake of the Age of Discovery, deepening our understanding of cultural exchanges embodied in the material culture of craft products.

At the end of the course, in consideration of the ‘Cool Japan’ phenomenon recently popular overseas, students will carry out presentations and discussions showcasing market expansion for contemporary Japanese craft products now being produced and community development initiatives that are responding to multiculturalism.

Course Objectives

- (1) To acquire basic knowledge (raw materials, manufacturing process, types, and history) relating to Japanese fine arts and crafts (chiefly ceramic and lacquerware).
- (2) To learn the history and subsequent evolution of the European reception of Japanese arts and crafts.
- (3) To investigate craft products being produced currently in Fukui Prefecture.
- (4) To think about future possibilities for Japanese craft products in light of the cultural phenomenon of ‘Cool Japan’.

Expected Outcomes

- (1) Students will be able to provide foreign nationals with a basic description of craft products as a part of Japan’s traditional culture.
- (2) Equipped a basic familiarity of the history of cultural exchanges involving craft products, students will have insights into future cultural exchanges and economic outcomes involving the material culture of Japanese craft products.

Prerequisites

None in particular. However, while it may be attended subsequently, students are also advised to enroll in “International Cultural Exchange,” which will provide a more up-to-date understanding of cultural exchange.

Class Materials

The text *Hikaku bunkaron* [Comparative Culture] will be distributed on the first day of class.

References

Compiled under the supervision of Itō Yoshiaki, *Zukai Nihon no yakimono* (Illustrated Book of Japanese Ceramics), Tōkyō Bijutsu, 2014.

Compiled under the supervision of Katō Hiroshi, *Zukai Nihon no shikkō* (Illustrated Book of Japanese Lacquerware), Tōkyō Bijutsu, 2014.

Course Method

This course will follow the plan laid out in the text *Hikaku bunkaron* [Comparative Culture] prepared by the instructor, and organized as series of lectures supplemented with images and videos that describe historical events relating to Japanese craft products. At the final stage of the course, all students will give presentations on everyday craft products manufactured in Fukui that might be able to attract foreign interest. These presentations are expected to stimulate class discussion of the unique features of the craft products presented, as well as their potential markets.

Evaluation/Assessment

Reaction Paper

A written response framing such topics as what students learned while listening to the lectures, what about the lectures left the deepest impression, and what if any doubts or questions they had about the lecture contents.

Presentation

Students will conduct independent studies of everyday craft products manufactured in Fukui that might be able to attract foreign interest or else enrich the lives of foreign nationals. They will then present on the features and markets of the craft products in question, as well as challenges relating to their manufacture. The format for handouts on the date of presentation will be specified near the middle of the course.

Discussion

The class will carry out a joint discussion of the features and market possibilities of the craft products introduced in the presentations about Fukui.

Report

On a topic to be specified by the instructor, students will compose a report (approximately 2,400 characters), summarizing what they learned both in class and through their own independent study.

Grading

10%	Reaction Paper
20%	Presentation
20%	Discussion
50%	Report

Course Schedule

Week 1: Orientalism during the Reign of Louis XIV

Learning the background behind the cultivation of orientalism among the royalty and aristocracy with the establishment of the French East India Company under the reign of Louis XIV in the context of French court culture.

Week 2: Japanese Lacquerware

Surveying the history of Japanese lacquerware from the perspective of exchanges with other countries to learn about the nature of the sap harvested from the lacquer tree (*urushi*), which flourishes only in Asia, the types and techniques of lacquerware processed using this lacquer, and the primary characteristics of traditional Japanese lacquerware (e.g., gold lacquer, mother-of-pearl decoration).

Week 3: Overseas Exports of Japanese Lacquerware

Learning about the history of how Japan and Europe established contact in the advent of the Age of Discovery and how Japanese lacquer goods began to be exported to Europe, as well as about the styles of lacquer goods that made their way across the sea through mercantile actors such as the Dutch East India Company.

Week 4: Japanese Ceramic

Surveying the history of Japanese ceramic from the perspective of exchanges with other countries to learn how fired ware referred to as ceramic in general terms is broadly divided into four different types, the difference between porcelain and pottery, and the history of how the Japanese manufacture of porcelain originated in Hizen at the start of the seventeenth century.

Week 5: Overseas Exports of Japanese Porcelain

Learning about the history of how porcelain produced in Hizen in the mid-seventeenth century began to be exported to Europe by the Dutch East India Company and about the styles of porcelain that actually made their way across the sea.

Week 6: European Aristocrats' Collections of Japanese Porcelain

Learning about the collection of porcelain, which came into fashion among the European royalty and aristocracy from the late seventeenth and early- to mid-eighteenth century, focusing on some features of the collections amassed by the principal countries and collectors.

Week 7: The Beginnings of Porcelain Production in Europe (1): The Meissen Porcelain Manufactory

Learning about the history of how, inspired by porcelain from the Far East, European porcelain first came to be produced in Germany in the early years of eighteenth century, and how the secret of its production was subsequently disclosed, leading to the proliferation of porcelain kilns across Europe in the eighteenth century.

Week 8: Rococo Art and Orientalism during the Reign of Louis XV

To learn about the relationship between orientalism and rococo art, which emerged and expanded in France under the reign of Louis XV through the influence of women such as the Marquise de Pompadour, chief mistress to the king, and then spread throughout the various nations of Europe.

Week 9: The Beginnings of Porcelain Production in Europe (2): The Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory

To learn the process by which the French porcelain manufactory of Sèvres, which strove to produce products that outdid the porcelain coming out of Germany and the Far East, garnered acclaim for having surpassed its rivals in the late eighteenth century, and the differences between the two types of porcelain (soft-paste and hard-paste porcelain) produced in Europe during this era.

Week 10: European Imitation Lacquerware

To learn about furniture repurposing Japanese and Chinese metal-sprinkled lacquerware (*makie*) and techniques for mimicking oriental lacquer with Western varnishes developed in various parts of Europe that make use of raw materials other than lacquer.

Week 11: Marie Antoinette and Japanese Lacquerware

To learn about the characteristics of the collection of Japanese lacquerware owned by Marie Antoinette, the queen of Louis XVI, and the background existence of unofficial private trade channels (*wakini bōeki*).

Week 12: Orientalism as Seen in Nineteenth Century French Pottery

To learn about orientalist styles of ceramic produced in nineteenth-century France at the height of *Japonisme* from the various perspectives of decorations, materials, glazes, forms, and application.

Week 13: Cool Japan: Washoku, Tea Ceremony, Nambu Ironware, Washi Paper, and Japanese Apparel

Through an overview of the history of cultural exchanges between Japan and France in the modern and contemporary period in terms of how the two have influenced each other as countries rich in history and culture, to understand the realities of the 'Cool Japan' phenomenon in contemporary France.

Week 14: Presentations about Fukui's Craft Traditions

To discover craft products from Fukui to introduce to foreign audiences, and present these to the class.

Week 15: Discussion of the Fukui's Craft Traditions

To carry out a joint discussion of the characteristics and potential market pathways for the craft products from Fukui identified by each student for introduction to foreign audiences.

Preparation and Follow-up

Preparation: Before each class, students should prepare by reading the relevant portions of the text and references (about 1 hour).

Follow-up: After each class, students should review the content of the class and summarize any questions (about 1 hour).

Presentation Preparation: Students should gather information, refine their ideas for the content they would like to present, and prepare presentation materials (about 15 hours).