PAAS 280 (SPRING 2018): A TASTE OF JAPAN

Instructor: Cody Poulton
Office: Clearihue C213
Class Times: MW, 4:30-6 PM
Office Hours: MW, 2:30-3:30 PM or by appointment
Class Location: DSB C118

Course Description:

In the last generation, Japanese food had gone global. North America’s own supermarkets and restaurants, to say nothing of our palates, have acquired a taste for new flavours, ingredients and methods of cooking … or not, depending on whether you’re into readymade food or consider raw food a form of cooking. Sushi and ramen have become international fast foods, which is to say they are now almost as common to us as pizza or donuts. Still, one of the greatest appeals of Japanese cuisine is its promise of a healthier diet. This is increasingly a concern in an overfed and undernourished society where many of us have forgotten the pleasures, as well as the hard work, of cultivation and food preparation, not to mention dining as a form of communion, both with family and our larger communities. Despite its “exoticism,” Japanese cuisine can have much to teach us about eating locally, seasonally, and ethically.

Japanese cuisine (washoku) has recently been designated world heritage status by UNESCO. (French and Mexican cuisine, and most recently, the Neapolitan pizza, are the
only others so far awarded.) Japan’s highly refined cuisine, based on the freshest ingredients, light and simple seasonings, and exquisite presentation, has been an overwhelming influence over two of the world’s greatest culinary artists, Ferran Adrià, formerly chef of El Bulli (Spain), and René Redzepi of Noma in Copenhagen. Many such culinary artists have studied under Japanese masters like Murata Yoshihiro of Kyoto’s Kikunoi restaurant. Today, Japan is a leader, not just in Japanese cuisine, but also in fine international dining, and Japanese chefs and sommeliers travel the world to train. There are more restaurants with Michelin stars (the mark of culinary excellence) in Tokyo today than in Paris and London combined! And many of those Michelin stars are for French, Italian, and Chinese, etc. restaurants, run for the most part by Japanese.

This course will look at the history of Japanese cuisine and show how the country’s obsession with eating well anticipated the global slow food movement and our age of celebrity chefs. A few topics we will cover include:

- **Food as sustenance:** The production, nutrition and economy of eating
- **Food and the environment:** The ecology of eating
- **Food and class:** The relationship between wealth and culinary tastes and habits
- **Food, region and nation:** Culinary culture as identity
- **Food and ethics:** Related to the environment, but not exclusively; the religious and moral practices of consumption
- **Food and aesthetics:** Gastronomy as art, both to be seen and eaten
- **Food fads:** cooking, competition, and the popular culture of consumerism
- **Food and conviviality:** The sociality of food as a symbol of what brings us together.

PAAS 280 is laid out roughly in a number of culinary courses: each week we will address a certain ingredient and/or method of preparation—such as rice, soy beans, fish, and tea—and their significance to the Japanese people. Films, images, and readings will provide the basis for our exploration of Japanese food, but as much as possible I hope to engage all our senses, especially taste and smell, as we encounter new ingredients, scents, and flavours. We don’t have the resources to prepare food in class—this is not America’s Test Kitchen, and certainly not Chairman Kaga’s Kitchen Stadium!—but some demonstrations will be provided, such as chanoyu, the classic “tea ceremony.” Homework will include having you each try making some simple Japanese dishes, such as miso soup, *tsukemono* (pickles), and *takikomi gohan* (seasoned mixed rice), and I hope we can find time to make excursions to restaurants and suppliers of Japanese foods. There will be something to enjoy for all tastes and diets!

**Texts:**


Other texts will be made available online, as e-books, web links, and PDF files.
Evaluation:

Class attendance and participation: 10%
Weekly recipes: 20%
Midterm: 15%
Essay:
  Outline and bibliography: 10%
  Final essay (2,000 words): 30%
Final Test: 15%

Percentage grades will be assigned to all work submitted.

Class attendance and participation (10%):
Regular class attendance is very important. Attendance will be taken every class and absences will have an adverse effect on grades. However, if you must miss class for some compelling reason, please let me know in advance of the class meeting. Note that according to the department's policy on minimum attendance, students are required to attend at least 90% of all classes. Students who show up for less than the minimum will receive a mark of zero out of the 10% assigned for this part of the course evaluation and may even be asked to withdraw from the course, unless due reason for their absence has been provided. Class participation involves engaging actively in class discussion by offering comments on the texts and responding to the comments of other students. Put your laptop computers and smart phones away! Take notes the old-fashioned way, with pen and paper.

Weekly recipes (20%): Eat your way through this course. 10 recipes over 10 weeks of class, each recipe counting for 2% of your total mark. On a single double-sided sheet of paper provide a simple recipe (ingredients, proportions, preparation style and cooking method). Try out this recipe at home; post a photo of it and tell me how it tasted! If the recipe is missing any of these essential items (ingredients, preparation, results, photo) you will be docked 1%; more than one of these essential items and you will not be graded on the work.

Midterm (15%): The midterm will be held on February 19, and will test you on basic facts, terms, names and concepts associated with material covered in our class readings, lectures and discussions to date. Study guides will be provided prior to the midterm and final.

Essay:
  Outline and bibliography (due February 28): 10%
  Final essay (2,000 words, due April 9): 30%

Everyone is required to write a research essay on a given topic to do with Japanese food. A list of suggested topics will be provided in the second week of class, but feel free to suggest one of your own. Your outline and bibliography (minimum 2 pages) must be submitted by February 28. Your final essay is due April 9.
Final Test (15%) April 4. The exam will review basic facts, terms, names, and concepts associated with material covered in our class readings, lectures and discussions.

A Few Tips:

All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, on single-sided paper. Always proof-read your work before submitting it, and keep an extra copy of anything you have submitted in case the original is somehow "lost in transit."

* All work must be submitted on the scheduled dates. Unless prior permission has been given, students who fail to submit their outline and essay at the time it is due will be deducted one letter grade (e.g., B+ to B) from the total mark for that assignment for every day it is late. Written assignments submitted more than one week past deadline without prior approval will receive a mark of zero.

** Plagiarism and cheating are not permitted and if you are caught you will fail! See the attached department policy on cheating and plagiarism. I suggest you read it very carefully!

Percentage grades will be given for all work.

I'll assess your written work on the basis of the following (percentages are rough benchmarks for weighting of my evaluations):

CONTENT (/40%): Are all the points you raised relevant to your argument? Have you backed up your information with factually accurate and relevant data, with reference to primary sources and secondary criticism, and (if necessary) material covered in class lectures and readings? Have you covered all the relevant points? Are your ideas original and well thought out?

STRUCTURE (/20%): Do you state clearly and explicitly your topic and thesis in your introduction? Is there a coherent and logical progression of your ideas, which are reviewed and summarized in your conclusion?

GRAMMAR AND STYLE (/20%): Please note that the University Calendar advises that "term essays and examination papers will be refused a passing grade if they are deficient in English." You are expected to demonstrate that you can express yourself clearly, correctly, and as precisely as possible in writing. Should you fail to do so, the least you can expect is a letter-grade reduction (i.e., 'A' to 'B'). On the other hand, writing with originality and flair may boost your grade. English-writing clinics are available for those who feel they need them.

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION (/10%): Have you used correct spelling and punctuation? Spelling should be Anglo-Canadian, not American style: for example, "theatre" not "theater;" "colour," not "color."

PHYSICAL PRESENTATION (/10%): Is the work double-spaced, typed, and legible? Does it have a title page with your name on it? Is it stapled together? Are citations identified by page references or footnotes? Is a complete bibliography provided?
Research Tools:

The library is the obvious place to go, not only for materials on Course Reserve, but for any materials for your research or general reading on this subject. Many resources, such as journal articles, encyclopedias and dictionaries and even some books and videos, are available online. The following link provides an excellent guide for research and reading materials in Japanese Studies: http://libguides.uvic.ca/JapaneseStudies. Our Asian Librarian Ying Liu is a fount of information, and will be most happy to assist you if you have any questions.

Style Guide:

Please use Anglo-Canadian, not American spelling, of English words, and italics for words that are not in the English lexicon. Words like sushi and sashimi can be found in an English dictionary, but less familiar words, like washoku and dashi, should be in italics. Put academic articles, essays and shorter works into quotation marks (e.g. Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal”), but longer, book-length works into italics (e.g. Michael Ashkenazi, Food Culture in Japan). Either the MLA or Chicago Style of citation is permissible. Please refer to the following link on the University of Victoria Library website: https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/guides/index.php