



## NARRATIVES OF JAPANESE DIASPORA

Seminar Leader: **Matthew Sueda**

House Leader: **Tomohiro Nakata**

### Course Description

What does it mean to be “Japanese American”? This course provides a survey of the history of the Japanese diaspora in the United States, running from the 1860s to the present. The course is structured chronologically: we will learn about the immigration of the Issei (一世), the first generation; the Nisei (二世) and their experiences with World War II and internment; the Sansei (三世) and the Cold War era; and lastly, the Yonsei (四世), with a discussion of repatriation to Japan. We will examine representations of Japanese Americans in literature, film, and critical sociological texts in order to understand the roles that history, memory, and mythology play in shaping identity. The objectives of this course are to give students an overview of the Japanese diaspora by critically engaging with and discussing immigrant narratives through multiple lenses, and to provide a voice and a new appreciation for a history that is not always heard.

### Schedule

**Day 1:** *1868–1924. Narratives of Issei immigration to the US.*

First we will introduce the idea of the Japanese diaspora to the United States. We will talk about the early history of the immigration movement, the motivations for immigration, and the American dream. Who are the Issei (一世)? Why did they come to America? What new challenges did they face? What were they searching for that they couldn't find in Japan?

**Day 2:** *1924–1955. The Nisei & World War II.*

We will continue our story by examining the second generation, the Nisei, who struggled with equality and finding a sense of belonging in the face of war. We will talk about the internment camps, identity crises, and the goals of Japanese American literature. Who are the Nisei (二世)? How were Japanese-Americans affected by the war?

**Day 3:** *1955–Present. The Sansei, the Yonsei, & becoming the “model minority”*

How did World War II affect the Sansei (三世)? We will explore the changing ideas of what it meant to be American, and how Japanese-Americans came to view and understand their place in society. We will also spend some time discussing the Yonsei generation's “loss” of Japanese culture.

**Day 4:** *Japanese-American repatriation and complex ideas of identity.*

So what does it mean to be “Japanese-American”? How has this idea changed over time? Why might Japanese-Americans want to go back to Japan? These are questions we will explore today, as we wrap up and draw connections from each day to summarize what



we've learned together. We will conclude with student presentations on examples of Japanese-American individuals and their challenges with identity.

## Final Exercise

On the final day, students will give presentations on contemporary examples of Japanese nationals who have come to the US and moved back to Japan, or Japanese Americans who have immigrated back to Japan. What challenges do these individuals face? Why did they leave? What did they hope to find? Where is home?

## Pre-Seminar Assignments and Readings

Day 1:

- Watch *Picture Bride* (1995) movie  
[https://www.dropbox.com/s/mfg6bl2z2q94uso/PICTURE\\_BRIDE.m4v.zip?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/mfg6bl2z2q94uso/PICTURE_BRIDE.m4v.zip?dl=0)
- Read *Limited Identity Construction* by Jonathan Okamura along with accompanying handout. Taken from page 126 in *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawaii* (2008)
- Read handout with excerpts from *Issei: Japanese Immigrants in Hawaii* by Yukiko Kimura (1988)
- Read handout with excerpts from *Japanese Picture Marriage and the Image of Immigrant Women in Early Twentieth-Century California* (2004) by Kei Tanaka and *The Buddha in the Attic* by Julie Otsuka (2011)

Day 2:

- Read handout with highlighted transcript of *Executive Order 9066* (1942) and description of *Korematsu v. United States* (1944)
- Read handout with excerpts from *Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston (1973)
- Read handout with excerpts from *No-No Boy* by John Okada (1957)

Day 3:

- Read handout with highlighted transcript of *Sansei: Being Local* by Jonathan Okamura (2008)
- Read handout with excerpts from *'I'm American, not Japanese!': the struggle for racial citizenship among later-generation Japanese Americans* by Takeyuki Tsuda (2014)
- Read handout with excerpts from *Making Yonsei* poem by Carrie Y. Yakahata (2002). p.73-74. The Japanese American Contemporary Experience in Hawaii.



Day 4:

- Read handout with highlighted transcript of *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki (2013)
- Read handout with excerpts from *Racialized national identity construction in the ancestral homeland: Japanese American migrants in Japan* by Jane H. Yamashiro (2011)

## Message from the House Leader

Hi everyone! My name is Tomohiro Nakata (call me Tomo!). I am 20 years old, and a third year student at Keio University, studying Education Economics. I lived in the United States when I was child. After that, I came back to Japan. This seminar we will teach “Narratives of Japanese Diaspora”. I know it is a little bit difficult for you. However, it plays key role to understand what is going on in the international world today. I hope you’ll enjoy discussing the topic. Anyway, I can’t wait to meet you all! Please send me an e-mail if you have a question. See you soon!

## Message from the Seminar Leader

Hey everyone! My name is Matthew Sueda (please call me Matt) and I’m a rising third year student at Swarthmore College. I’m studying economics and I will be done with my second year of Japanese by the beginning of the seminar. I was born and raised in Hawaii and I’m very excited to work with you—this is a strange sort of homecoming for me because I myself am of the Yonsei generation, and it is my first trip to Japan! I look forward to having wonderful conversations with you all, as we explore Japan’s rich immigrant history in the United States together. Please e-mail me if you have any questions, or if you just want to chat!