Course Description

This interdisciplinary seminar style course is a reading and writing intensive course that explores cultural, economic, and geopolitical aspects of food in Japanese history and society. Food is common to all humankind, but different varieties of foods or cuisine also serve to identify nations, classes, genders or other groups of people, marking boundaries between ourselves and “Others.” Topics for readings and discussions include: the relationships between food and national identity, imperialism/colonialism, gender and class; representative Japanese foods; and globalization/glocalization of Japanese foods. Readings include popular and academic articles and book chapters offering historical, ethnographic, or anthropological perspectives on food studies, food-related fiction, and primary sources related to food. We will also watch films and videos related to Japanese cuisine. The course will include both required and optional excursions to food related sites. This course is designated (W) for Writing Intensive. Each week you will be required to write a brief essay of 250 - 500 words (1 - 2 pages).

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will develop awareness of the linkages between food and cultural identity for Japan, for the U.S. and for their own home regions (SAC Course Objective 1)

Students will understand how foods and practices of Japanese cuisine have been shaped by immigration, imperialism, technology, media, and other global forces. A visit to the Shin-Yokohama ramen museum will highlight the role of imperialism and immigration in constructing popular foods (SAC Course Objective 2)

Students will participate in a group project that requires them to visit regional food specialty shops and to interview host institution students and/or other Japanese locals. This group project will also be informed by an excursion to the world famous Tsukiji market (SAC Course Objective 3)

Students will analyze and discuss the roles of class, gender, and nation in the practice of Japanese foodways. (SAC Course Objective 4)

Course Materials

All required readings will be posted on Laulima under the Resources tab or available online. Please have readings or notes handy during class so that you can refer to specific pages and passages during class discussion. Assigned videos to be viewed before class are also available under the Resources tab.

Many of the assigned readings are from the following volume, if you're interested in owning your own hard or electronic copy.

Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined according to the following:

65% Participation and Weekly Discussion Response
Attendance at every class meeting and participation in each class discussion is required. Each week you will be required to write a brief essay of 250 - 500 words (1 - 2 pages) on the discussion topic posted for the week in Laulima Forums. Each week will be worth 5 total points for participation: 3 points for written essay responses to the discussion questions, 2 point for participation during in-class discussion. For directions on how to write your weekly responses, see "Assignment Instructions" in Laulima Resources.

15% Reading Presentations
For each class session, one person will be assigned to give a 5 - 10 minute introduction to the readings and topics for the week and to lead class discussion. DO NOT SUMMARIZE OR RECAP the readings or videos during your presentation. In general, discuss how the readings and videos relate to one another or earlier course readings, how you responded to the posted discussion questions, and what you think are the best (and/or worst) aspects of the readings. Formulate several open-ended questions for discussion with your classmates. You can also bring in other related information to shed light on that week's topic, like brief video clips, outside information about the authors, foods, etc.

20% Group Project
You will work in assigned groups of 4 people to complete a research project related to Japanese traditional foods or regional cuisines and will prepare a 15 minute presentation for our class. 25% of your grade will be based on your group's evaluation of your efforts on the team. For additional details on the group project, see "Assignment Instructions" in Laulima Resources
Course Schedule and Assignments

Week 1 Introduction / What is Japanese Cuisine?

In class Film Screening - Wa-shoku: Beyond Sushi

Eric Rath, "What is Traditional Japanese Food?" in Rath, Japan's Cuisines: Food, Place, and Identity (Reaktion Books, 2017)


Discussion Topic- Write a 1 - 2 page essay on the following, using information from the readings and film. What role do national cuisines and/or traditional foods play in national identity? Why is food an important (and increasingly popular) topic for studying national histories?

PART I - Historical Overviews

Week 2 Traditional Foods

Videos via Laulima/YouTube Soba - Begin Japanology
Tempura - Begin Japanology

Ken Albala, "Japanese Food in the Early Modern European Imagination" in Devouring Japan

Lorie Brau, "Soba, Edo style: Food, Aesthetics, and Cultural Identity" in Devouring Japan

Discussion question for response papers: How are current stereotypes and media representations of Japanese cuisine, such as those in the film Wa-shoku and the videos this week challenged or supported in these readings on food in other historical eras?

Learning Activity
Class inspection and tasting of different types of soba noodles
Optional activity Soba making class

Week 3 Markets and Food Culture in Early Modern Japan

Video via Laulima/YouTube- - Tsukiji Market

Katarzyna Cwiertka, "Meibutsu and Commercialized Travel in Early Modern Japan" from Branding Japanese Food

Susan Hanley, "A Healthful Lifestyle" from Everyday Things in Premodern Japan

Discussion question for response papers: From what you have observed of the contemporary diet, do you think that the Japanese maintained a healthy eating lifestyle? Why or why not?

Learning Activity
Visit Tsukiji Market in Tokyo
Week 4 New Foods and Foodways - Meiji and Beyond

Videos via Laulima/YouTube - The Emperor's Cook (Tenno no Ryoriban)
Yoshoku - Japanology Plus

Katarzyna Cwiertka, Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power, and National Identity, pp. 13-55 (Note - the entire book is posted in Laulima, but you are only responsible for the pages indicated)

Shoko Higashiyotsuyanagi, "The History of Domestic Cookbooks in Modern Japan" in Rath and Assman, eds. Japanese Foodways

Discussion question for response papers: How are new Western dishes and ingredients introduced to the Japanese population? Why do you think they were successful?

Learning Activity
Optional weekend lunch excursion to Rengatei, a yoshoku restaurant established in 1895 and still operating in the Ginza

Week 5 Imperialism, War, and Umami

Video Screenings via Laulima/YouTube - Dashi - Begin Japanology
Fermented Foods Begin Japanology


Jordan Sand, "A Short History of MSG," Gastronomica, 5:4, 200

Discussion question for response papers: How is Japan's rise an imperial and colonial power reflected in new food practices? What role does "umami" play in Japan's national cuisine?

Learning Activity
Class tasting of varieties of different types of fermented foods
Optional weekend visit to Tobacco and Salt Museum and Kappabashi chef shopping street

Week 6 Postwar Dietary Changes and Trends

Video Screenings via Laulima/YouTube - The Colonel Comes to Japan, Full Moon Lunch

Mire Koikari, "LOVE! SPAM!" Food, Military, and Empire in Post-WWII Okinawa" in Devouring Japan

Eiko Siniawer, "Discarding Cultures: Social Critiques of Food Waste in an Affluent Japan" in Devouring Japan

Discussion question for response papers: How do changes in postwar food culture reflect greater changes in society, the economy, and culture? What continuities can be seen with earlier food cultures (e.g. prewar, Edo)?

Learning Activity
Go to a US based fast food chain such as KFC or McDonalds and observe differences and similarities between the US and Japan in the practices and behavior of employees and guests. Bring your observations to class for discussion.
Week 7 Presentation of Group Projects - Regional Food Identities

Working in assigned groups of three or four, you will conduct research and prepare a 10-15 minute slideshow presentation for our class on an assigned topic about regional Japanese foods, cuisines and foodways. For additional details on the group project, see "Assignment Instructions" in Laulima Resources.

Learning Activity
In preparation for your presentation, your group will visit a prefectural "antenna shop" in Tokyo that specializes in food and other products from a specific region or city.

PART II Themes and Topics in Japanese Cuisine

Week 8 Rice

Video Screenings via Laulima/YouTube - Rice - NHK Trails to Oishii Tokyo
Mochi - Japanology,
Onigiri - Japanology Plus

Eric Rath, "Rice and its Identities" in Rath, Japan's Cuisines: Food, Place, and Identity (Reaktion Books, 2017),

Penelope Francks, "Rice and the Path of Economic Development in Japan" in Francesca Bray, Ed. Rice: Global Networks and New Histories (2015)

Selections from Oishinbo: The Joy of Rice

Discussion question for response papers: According to the authors, why is rice so central to Japanese food identity? Do you think this is as true today as it was 100 years ago? Why or why not?

Learning Activity
Optional weekend lunch excursion to a rice-centric restaurant

Week 9 Culinary Nationalism and Branding

Video via Laulima/YouTube - Sushi Police Ep. 1
Yakitate Japan Ep. 1

Theodore Bestor, "Washoku, Far and Near: UNESCO, Gastrodiplomacy and the Cultural Politics of Traditional Japanese Cuisine" in Devouring Japan

Yoshimi Osawa, "We can Taste but Others Cannot": Umami as an Exclusively Japanese Concept" in Devouring Japan

Discussion topic for response papers: Nationalism is often considered a negative force that assumes that assumes that one’s nation (in terms of things like culture, society or political system) is superior to others. Is culinary nationalism the same as other forms of nationalism? How does popular media work to build and sustain culinary nationalism
Week 10 Bento

Video via Laulima/YouTube  
*Kyūshoku School Lunches, Bento* - Japanology


Kenji Ekuan, *The Aesthetics of the Japanese Lunchbox*, excerpts

**Discussion question for response papers:** Analyze the aesthetic appeal of at least three different bento boxes you have photographed.

**Learning Activity**
Students will take photographs of a variety of bento lunchboxes seen in different locations during their daily activities (e.g. train station, convenience stores, cafeterias, department stores, restaurants) and will bring these to class to discuss their aesthetic appeals.

Week 11 Gourmets and Connoisseurship

Film Screening via Laulima or Kanopy - *Tampopo*

Nancy Stalker, "Rosanjin the Epicurean: Roots of a Gourmet Nation" in *Devouring Japan*

Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "The Gourmet Club" (1919)

**Discussion question for response papers:** What does it mean to be a “gourmet”? In what ways are Japanese gourmets similar to or different from gourmets from other nations?

Week 12 Miso and Soy

Video Screening via Laulima/YouTube - *Miso* - Japanology Plus  
*A 750 Year old Secret- How Soy Sauce is Still Made Today*  
*Tofu - Trails to Oishii Tokyo*

Sidney Mintz, et. al.  "The Significance of Soy"

David Wolff, "Bean There: Toward a Soy-Based History of Northeast Asia"

**Discussion question for response papers:** What do you believe is the most significant soy product in the Japanese diet and why?

**Learning Activity**
Optional weekend excursion - visit to a Tokyo area miso specialty shop for miso tasting

Week 13 Sushi and Sustainability

Video Screening via Laulima/YouTube - *Sushi: The Global Catch*


Paul Greenberg, "Tuna" from *Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Food* (Penguin, 2011)

**Discussion question for response papers:** Write an opinion essay on why you think sushi has become so popular worldwide using and citing information from the articles and videos.
Week 14 The Rise of Ramen

Video via Laulima/YouTube - Ramen - Begin Japanology
Ramen - Japanology Plus

George Solt, "Ramen and U.S. Occupation Policy" in Rath and Assman, eds., Japanese Foodways Past and Present

Satomi Fukutomi, "Ramen Connoisseurs: Class, Gender, and the Internet" in Rath and Assman, eds. Japanese Foodways

Discussion question for response papers: Write a memoir about some aspect of your own experience eating ramen

Learning Activity
Visit Shin-Yokohama Ramen Museum

Week 15 Convenience

Video via Laulima/YouTube - Convenience Stores - Japanology
Conveyor Belt Sushi - Japanology

Gavin H. Whitelaw, "Konbini-Nation The Rise of the Convenience Store in Post-Industrial Japan" (pp. 69-88)

Theodore C. Bestor, "Kaiten-sushi and Konbini: Japanese Food Culture in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

Discussion question for response papers: Write an opinion essay arguing either A) Konbini and kaiten-sushi are ruining traditional cuisine or B) Konbini and kaiten are perfect representatives of contemporary cuisine.
Other Course Information and Policies

I reserve the right to modify this syllabus, course assignments and course requirements during the semester.

Your Rights:
Every student has the right to a safe and productive learning environment. If your learning is hampered by any of the following, please seek help through me or the following resources available to all of us here at UH Manoa.

• Sexual discrimination or harassment (including stalking) in class, or anywhere on campus:
  Gender Equity Office/Advocacy Office  2600 Campus Road, QLCSSC Room 210
  808-956-9977

• Disability (including non-visible): This may include learning disabilities, hearing or vision difficulties, test anxiety or other non-detectable disabilities. Any disabilities disclosed to Kokua center are bound to strict confidentiality between the instructor and Kokua, including any special arrangements made for testing or otherwise. Kokua Program, Director Ann Ito  QLCSS Room 013  voice :(808) 956-7511  text: (808) 956-7612

• Civil Rights Violation: UH has a non-discrimination policy that legally protects all of us.
  Jill Nunakawa, QLCSSC, room 210, 956-4431

Academic Integrity
You are expected to adhere to university requirements on academic honesty and integrity. Behaviors such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, copying of another student’s work, or cheating in any form are an offense against the academic community and will be dealt with accordingly. Depending on the severity of the violation, students will receive the grade of F for either the assignment or the course and will be reported to the proper UHM authorities.

E-Mail, Communications and Laptop Use
I will occasionally use e-mail and Laulima for course-related announcements and communications. E-mail will be sent to your official email address so make certain this is current. Missed email is not an acceptable excuse for missed communications. Check Laulima and e-mail regularly--at least once per week --to make certain you are aware of current course announcements. If you have questions or course related issues to discuss with me, I strongly suggest you come to my office hours, rather than sending an email. If you choose to send email instead, include the course number in the subject line and be advised that you may have to wait up to 48 hours for a response.