The Geisha - Evolution and Role in Contemporary Japan

Section 1

| Instructor/Title | Professor Arif Iqball |

【Course Outline / Description】

Painted by Picasso, sculpted by Rodin, entertainers to Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles, and US Presidents, yet the role and image of the Geisha has often been misinterpreted outside Japan and has shaped Western stereotypes about Japan and Japanese women. Being historically closed in a world of secrecy, not many Japanese either have been able to get access to this world which has its own rules and etiquette with very little documentation. This course examines the primary role of the Geisha in Japan as an artist and an entertainer encompassing a variety of important social, cultural and historical elements and through the research and use of academic literature, historical photographs, documentaries and movie representations, and conversations with current Geisha, attempts to educate the Asian and Japanese Studies student on the true role and place of these artists in Japanese culture, and in a traditional world which runs parallel and yet is completely different than the modern Japanese world of manga, anime, and robots.

With emphasis on the Geisha of the five Kagai (districts) in Kyoto, this course not only explores the historical and cultural elements, but also introduces this relatively unknown and closed world and gives an account of the daily lives of these women, and examines as to why and how the Geisha have continued to survive and remain prominent over the past several hundred years, and as to what is their current and future role in contemporary Japan?

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

This course will enable the student to:
- Understand the historical role and evolution of the Geisha
- Contrast Euro-American and Japanese representations of the Geisha
- Understand the daily/working lives and the macrocosm of the Geisha
- Explore the Gei of the Geisha in the context of the art culture in Japan
- Discuss the role of the Geisha in Contemporary Japan and the impact of an aging demographic
- Pursue future Geisha Studies as a field of academic research
# Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Schedule of Instruction</th>
<th>Work outside of Classroom Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 1</td>
<td>(09/04)</td>
<td>Student, Teacher, and Course Introductions; Setting the Stage for the Semester</td>
<td>Write 1-Page Paper on Image of Geisha in host country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 2</td>
<td>(09/07)</td>
<td>Courtesans in Asia and Europe; Pictorial Glossary of the Maiko and Geiko World</td>
<td>Watch Movie: Life of Oharu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 3</td>
<td>(09/11)</td>
<td>Historical Perspectives (Heian - Tokugawa) Izumo no Okuni and The Kabuki Movement</td>
<td>Reading: Kawaguchi, Butterfly’s Sisters, Ch. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 4</td>
<td>(09/14)</td>
<td>The Tayu; Introduction of the Geisha to European and American audience</td>
<td>Reading: Kawaguchi, Butterfly’s Sisters, Ch. 3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 5</td>
<td>(09/18)</td>
<td>Changes During the Meiji Restoration The Miyako Odori</td>
<td>Reading: Kawaguchi, Butterfly’s Sisters, Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Lesson 6</td>
<td>(09/21)</td>
<td>Evolution of Japanese and Western stereotypes of Japanese Femininity and Masculinity</td>
<td>Reading: Kawaguchi, Butterfly’s Sisters, Ch. 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 7</td>
<td>(09/25)</td>
<td>Golden Period of Geisha (Post Meiji); Historical Timeline of Geisha Related Developments</td>
<td>Reading: Johnston (A Woman, Sex and Morality in Modern Japan, Chapter 4)</td>
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<td>Lesson 8</td>
<td>(09/28)</td>
<td>Historical Timeline (cont’d)</td>
<td>Watch Movie: Gion no Shimai</td>
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<td>Lesson 9</td>
<td>(10/02)</td>
<td>Pre and Post-War World of the Geisha</td>
<td>Paper due on Butterfly’s Sisters</td>
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<td>Lesson 10</td>
<td>(10/05)</td>
<td>The &quot;Postcard Girls” and the &quot;#9 Girls”;</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part I, Iwasaki Ch. 1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 11</td>
<td>(10/09)</td>
<td>The Atotori (Heiress to the Okiya); Butterfly's Sisters Paper Presentations;</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part I, Iwasaki Ch. 1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 12</td>
<td>(10/12)</td>
<td>Butterfly’s Sisters Paper Presentations; The Geisha Macrocosm</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part I, Iwasaki Ch. 1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 13</td>
<td>(10/16)</td>
<td>Geisha Macrocosm (cont’d); Mizoguchi’s Portrayal Of Geisha in Movies - Review of Sisters of Gion</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part II, Iwasaki Ch. 8-15</td>
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<td>Lesson 14</td>
<td>(10/19)</td>
<td>The Gei of the Geisha; Ties to Kabuki</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part II, Iwasaki Ch. 8-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 15</td>
<td>(10/23)</td>
<td>Daily Lives/Key Events: Shikomi to Maiko; The Misedashi</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 16-22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 16</td>
<td>(10/26)</td>
<td>GAIDAI SAI - NO CLASS</td>
<td>GAI DAII SAI - NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 17</td>
<td>(10/30)</td>
<td>Daily Events: Maiko - Geiko - Natori Geiko - Retirement; Sakkou - Danpatsushiki - Erika</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 23-31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 18</td>
<td>(11/02)</td>
<td>Gei (Cont’d) - Kyomai &amp; the Inoue School of Dance</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 30-38</td>
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<td>Lesson 19</td>
<td>(11/06)</td>
<td>The Gei (Cont’d) - Dance, Music, and Entertainment</td>
<td>Paper due on Dalby/Iwasaki</td>
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<td>Lesson 20</td>
<td>(11/09)</td>
<td>Movie: Real Geisha, Real Women Discussion of Gion Odori and Field Trip</td>
<td>1-Page Paper on “Real Geisha, Real Women”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 21</td>
<td>(11/12)</td>
<td>Movie Discussion: Real Geisha, Real Women; Maiko Hairstyles</td>
<td>Identification of Issues facing Geisha in Contemporary Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 22</td>
<td>(11/16)</td>
<td>The Kimono and the Geisha</td>
<td>Short Paper on Field trip and Key Insights/Final Paper Outline Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 23</td>
<td>(11/20)</td>
<td>Adopt a Maiko/Geiko Presentation</td>
<td>Adopt a Maiko/Geiko Presentation Due</td>
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<td>Lesson 24</td>
<td>(11/23)</td>
<td>Role of Geisha in Contemporary Japan</td>
<td>Listen to Podcast of Ex-Geisha Sayuri’s Interview</td>
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<td>Lesson 26</td>
<td>(11/30)</td>
<td>Role of Ookini Zaidan in Preservation of Geisha Culture; Geisha in other Hanamachi</td>
<td>Prep for Final Research paper presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 29</td>
<td>(12/11)</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Research Papers Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 30</td>
<td>(12/14)</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentations; Course Review; Feedback; Celebration</td>
<td>Prep for Final Exam</td>
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**Notes**

The schedule is tentative; the topics covered on each proposed date may change/expand depending on the understanding background and pace of the students.
### Textbooks/Reading Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>①</td>
<td>Butterfly's Sisters: The Geisha in Western Culture</td>
<td>Yoko Kawaguchi</td>
<td>Yale University Press (November 30, 2010)</td>
<td>0300115210 (978-0300115215)</td>
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<tr>
<td>③</td>
<td>Geisha (paperback version)</td>
<td>Liza Dalby</td>
<td>Vintage/Ebury (December 1, 2007)</td>
<td>0099286386 (978-0099286387)</td>
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### Additional Readings adapted from:


### Section 4

<table>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Term Paper)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Presentation)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>%</td>
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Section 5
【Additional Information】

1. Course Introduction

1.1. Introduce the Geisha
   1.1.1. Define a Geisha
   1.1.2. Discuss origin of the role
   1.1.3. Outline process to become a Geisha

1.2. Discuss overall scope of the course and discuss how this class can be used by the foreign student to understand several unique Japanese cultural and historical concepts

1.3. Introduce Course Textbooks
   1.3.1. Butterfly's Sisters as academic work on introduction of Geisha to Europe and associated reactions and stereotypes of the image of Geisha
   1.3.2. Geisha of Gion as an insider's account of the Flower and Willow World by Mineko Iwasaki - a Geisha considered to be the top in her time. Much of Golden's "Memoirs of a Geisha" were based on conversations with Mineko Iwasaki
   1.3.3. Geisha by Liza Dalby is an insider's account written by the first Westerner who worked as a geisha in the Pontocho district of Kyoto. Liza's work as a PhD. anthropology student led to the first real insights inside this closed world.

1.4. Enquiry on historical role and image of female entertainers in student countries

1.5. Discuss (historically) similar professions in other Asian & European countries

2. Pictorial Glossary of the Maiko and Geiko World to facilitate identification and classification

2.1. Define visual differences between a Maiko and a Geiko and a Tayu
   2.1.1. Origins of the make-up and the painted face
   2.1.2. Elements of a Maiko's Wardrobe
      2.1.2.1. Long-Sleeved Kimono
      2.1.2.2. From Handara to Darari-Obi
      2.1.2.3. Okobo, geta and zori
      2.1.2.4. Ozashiki kago
      2.1.2.5. Seasonal Kanzashi and accessories
      2.1.2.6. Different hairstyles reflecting different levels of seniority (wareshinobu, ofuku, sakko, yakko-shimada, and the katsuyama)
      2.1.2.7. Different make-up reflecting difference in seniority
      2.1.2.8. Concept of Misedashi
   2.1.3. Elements of a Geiko's Wardrobe
      2.1.3.1. Short sleeved Kimono
      2.1.3.2. Concept of Erikae
      2.1.3.3. Katsura & other ornament styles
   2.1.4. Elements of a Tayu's Wardrobe

2.2. Describe various other defining elements
   2.2.1. Pictures and significance of Sanbonashi
   2.2.2. Pictures of various Maiko and Geiko Senjafuda
2.2.3. Pictures of personalized *Maiko* and *Geiko Uchiwa*

2.3. Use historical and current photographs and videos to introduce:

2.3.1. **Five Kagai of Kyoto (including unique elements about each Kagai)**

2.3.2. *Ochaya*

2.3.3. *Okiya*

2.3.4. *Okami-san*

2.3.5. *Onoe-san*

2.3.6. *Otokoshi-san*

2.3.7. *Kamiyui-san*

2.3.8. *Jikata-san*

2.3.9. *Okini Zaidan*

2.4. **Annual Events**

2.4.1. **January** - *Shigyoshiki*

2.4.2. **January** - *Hatsuyori*

2.4.3. **February** - *Setsubun/Obake*

2.4.4. **April** - **Annual Dance Performance**

2.4.5. **July** - *Miyabi Kai*

2.4.6. **July** - *Gion Festival*

2.4.7. **August** - *Hassaku*

2.4.8. **October** - *Onshukai*

2.4.9. **October** - *Jidai Matsuri*

2.4.10. **November** - *Kanikakunisai*

2.4.11. **December** - *Kaomise Souken*

2.4.12. **December** - *Koto Hajime*

2.5. **Explain Relevant Terms and Concepts**

2.5.1. **Ichigensan Okotowari**

3. **Historical Perspectives (Tokugawa - Meiji)**

   Historical review of origin of the Geisha with clarity and descriptions of the differences between *yujo, hokan, taiko-mochi* and various types of geisha (*shiro, korobi, kido, joro, and machi/odoriko*). Discuss impact of Izumo no Okuni on Kabuki and image of female performers. Discuss evolution of the "women of the mind" versus "women of the body."

4. **Introduction to (and reception by) European and American audience. Discuss Western stereotypes of Japanese Femininity and Masculinity**

4.1. Discuss author Yoko Kawaguchi’s exploration of the Western portrayal of Japanese women and geishas in particular. She argues that in the West, Japanese women have come to embody certain ideas about feminine sexuality, and she analyzes how these ideas have been expressed in diverse art forms, ranging from fiction and opera to the visual arts and music videos. Among the many works Kawaguchi discusses are the art criticism of Baudelaire and Huysmans, the opera *Madam Butterfly*, the sculptures of Rodin, the Broadway play *Teahouse of the August Moon*. Butterfly’s Sisters also examines the impact on early twentieth-century theatre, drama, and dance theory of the performance styles of the actresses Madame Hanako and Sadayakko, both formerly Geishas who were introduced to Europe.

4.2. Discussion on contrasting Victorian values with Japanese nudes photographed by Baron Raimund von Stillfried. In the mid 1800’s nudity was not shameful in Japanese society with
men and women bathing together. While Kusakabe and other photographers photographed women in private poses, it was the work of Von Stillfried's photographs that were an inducement for Westerners to think of the Japanese as a more primitive society (as they were often lumped with images of primitive undeveloped cultures.

5. **Golden Period of Geisha (Post Meiji Restoration)**

5.1. Discuss how as a result of protecting samurai, politicians and noblemen who were successful in overthrowing the Shogunate, Geisha elevated their status in society. Many Geisha were adopted symbolically by noted families to qualify socially for marriage to various revolutionaries, who were now among the leaders of the country. By the mid-1870's, many Geisha were revered heroines and held significant positions in society. Geisha, as a social class became respectable.

5.2. Modification of Emancipation edicts of 1872 to allow Geisha to work as entertainers.

5.3. Public performances by three *hanamachi* as part of Kyoto Exposition

5.4. Start of Miyako Odori, Kamogawa Odori, and Kyo Odori

5.5. Ogawa Kazumasa's public exhibition of photographs where the public voted and the Geisha in this era became celebrities.

5.6. Patriotic spirit of Geisha in Sino-Chinese War

5.7. Soldiers carry postcards of Geisha in the Russo-Japanese war

5.8. Geisha as advertising models

5.9. Famous Geisha of Meiji, Taisho, and Showa Era

6. **Review of the Burns Collection - The "Postcard Girls" and the "No. 9 Girls"**

Ukiyo-e prints granted celebrity status to the women they were about. At the end of the 19th century, photographers such as Ogawa produced images of notable Geisha taking their celebrity to another level. In the early twentieth century, with the development of the photographic postcard, collecting images of Geisha became a Japanese passion. The photographic postcard expands the study of Geisha life. Many of the photographs taken in the nineteenth century were reproduced as photographic postcards. All commercial photographers exploited the postcard format, as it gave them a new market to their images. The photographic postcard granted worldwide dispersions of geisha images.

Since the late nineteenth century, the concept of the geisha has been misinterpreted by the Western world. The novels and periodicals of the end of the nineteenth century misguided the public as to the true role of the geisha. Photographers, who provided images of Japanese women, did not accurately label them, allowing the observer to come to his own conclusions and assumptions. To accurately present the life of the geisha, it is important to differentiate geisha from prostitute. Burns' collection identifies many visual clues distinguishing them.

Researching using photographic resources as historic documents leads to new discoveries that can be made when a large number of images are analyzed. Burns suggested that No. 9 girls have often been identified as Geisha but in reality they were prostitutes and lived in a brothel, frequently with the street address No. 9. Through the examination of numerous pictures, it becomes clear that "No. 9 girl" was a euphemistic term for prostitute.

7. **Post-War World of the Geisha**

7.1. Competition from cafe and bar girls as well as nightclub performers convinces Geisha to abandon modernization and emphasize traditional dress and entertainment. They become curators of the arts of the past.
7.2. Discuss Film Director Kenji Mizoguchi’s portrayal of post-war Geisha and women’s rights issues in movies.

Kenji Mizoguchi, one of the great Japanese film directors and in the company of Ozu and Kurosawa, directed many movies during the Post war years sympathetically exploring controversial issues of rights and dignity for women with socially restricted claims to self-determination. As a class, we will discuss three of his movies focusing on the plight of the Geisha:

- *Sisters of the Gion* (1936)
- *The Life of Oharu* (西鶴一代女, *Saikaku Ichidai Onna*) (1952)
- *A Geisha* (祇園囃子, *Gion hayashi*) (1953)

8. The Geisha Macrocosm

In-depth discussion of the individual roles of all the local businesses needed to support (and being supported by) the presence of the Geisha community (including but not limited to kimono and obi makers (and their suppliers); katsura makers; hair accessory makers; uchiwa makers; ryotei; shidashi-ya (food and beverage providers to the Ochaya); Kamiyui-san (nihongami hair salons for the Maiko and Geiko); Tabi, okobo, geta and zori manufacturers; etc.)

9. Transformation of The Artist

9.1. Start as an Apprentice: From Shikomi to Maiko

9.1.1. The Start of the Dream
9.1.2. Introduction to the Okiya
9.1.3. Daily life as a Shikomi
9.1.4. Introduction to Kyo-kotoba

9.2. Graduation to the Master: Maiko to Geiko

9.2.1. *Misedashi* (Pictorial explanation of event and new role)
9.2.3. *Sakkou* (Pictorial explanation)
9.2.4. *Kurokami* (video and symbolism)
9.2.5. *San-san-ku-do* ceremony
9.2.6. *Danpatsu-no-shiki* (Pictorial explanation of event)
9.2.7. Eriake (Pictorial explanation of event and new role)

9.3. Evolution of the Artist: *Geiko* to Natori *Geiko* to Retirement

9.3.1. Explanation of Daily Life & Events
9.3.2. New role as a Mentor - Becoming an *Onesan*
9.3.3. Further refinement of the Arts
9.3.4. Discussion of issues leading to stay/retire

10. The *Gei* of the Geisha
10.1. Creating a world of healing and “Taking care of the hearts of the customers”

10.2. Hospitality & Entertainment
   10.2.1. The art of Omotenashi
   10.2.2. Creating a World of Relaxation through Banter
   10.2.3. Ozashiki asobi

10.3. The Art of Dance and Performance
   10.3.1. Repertoire similarities with the world of Kabuki
   10.3.2. Kyomai & Inoue School of Dance (Gion Kobu)
   10.3.3. Wakayagi & Umemoto Styles (Miyagawa)
   10.3.4. Hanayagi Style (Kamishichiken)
   10.3.5. Onoe Style (Pontocho)
   10.3.6. Fujima Style (Gion Higashi)
   10.3.7. Ceremonial Performances

10.4. Music of the Geisha
   10.4.1. Ko-uta and Naga-uta adaptations in the Geisha world
   10.4.2. Ko-uta as illustrations of iroke
   10.4.3. Life as a Jikata-san

11. Documentary Review and Discussion: Real Geisha, Real Women

Real Geisha Real Women is a documentary by Peter Macintosh about the lives of several women in Kyoto, Japan of various generations who are, or have been Maiko and Geiko. Their stories are told in their own words as a series of vignettes without the use of a narrator. Rare footage of their journeys outside of Kyoto includes a hometown visit, a trip to Tokyo, as well as travels abroad.

12. Field Trip (November 1-10, exact day TBD): Gion Odori

13. Discussion of Current Issues and Role of Geisha in Contemporary Japan
   13.1. The Geisha and Tourism
   13.2. The Geisha and their dependent traditional industries
   13.3. Interactions with the local communities
   13.4. Impact of an aging customer demographic
   13.5. Availability of alternate income generation careers

14. Course Review & Final Exam Preparation