Inside the Secret World of the Geisha

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 Japanese 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 with its own rules and etiquette, and 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. Leveraging the instructor’s personal connections and research, a field trip to a seasonal dance performance, and conversations with current Geisha, as well as use of academic literature and visual documentation including historical photographs, documentaries and movie representations, this course attempts to provide a complete cultural experience to 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) to the modern Japanese world of manga, anime, and robots.

With emphasis on the Geisha of the five Kagai (performance 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 customer demographic
- Pursue future Geisha Studies as a field of academic research
## Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials

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<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Schedule of Instruction</th>
<th>Work outside of Classroom Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</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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<td>2</td>
<td>Discussion on the Role of Courtesans and Women Entertainers in both Japanese and non-Japanese cultures</td>
<td>Watch Movie: Life of Oharu</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The Tayu: Historical Perspectives (Heian - Tokugawa)</td>
<td>Reading: Kawaguchi, Butterfly's Sisters, Ch. 1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Izumo no Okuni and the Kabuki Movement; Evolution of the Pleasure quarters (Edo/Kyoto)</td>
<td>Reading: Kawaguchi, Butterfly's Sisters, Ch. 1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Historical Perspectives Cont'd;</td>
<td>Presentation Prep: Butterfly's Sisters, Ch. 1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Student Presentations (Butterfly's Sisters)</td>
<td>Reading: Enlightenment Geisha</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Changes During the Meiji Restoration</td>
<td>Reading: Johnston (A Woman, Sex and Morality in Modern Japan, Chapter 4)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Evolution of Japanese and Western stereotypes of Japanese Femininity and Masculinity; Views on Sexuality</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part I, Iwasaki Ch. 1-7</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Introduction of the Geisha to (and reception by) European and American audience</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part I, Iwasaki Ch. 1-7</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>The Impact of Photography on the image of the Geisha</td>
<td>Watch Movie: Gion no Shimai</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>The Golden Period of the Geisha</td>
<td>Watch Movie: Gion Bayashi</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Kenji Mizoguchi's Portrayal of Geisha in Movies</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part II, Iwasaki Ch. 8-15</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Daily Lives/Key Events: Shikomi to Maiko; The Misedashi</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part II, Iwasaki Ch. 8-15</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Daily Lives/Key Events: Maiko - Geiko - Natori Geiko - Retirement; Sakkou - Danpatsushiki - Erikae</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 16-22</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>The Gei of the Geisha - Kyomai &amp; the Inoue School of Dance</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 16-22</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>The Gei of the Geisha - Dance, Music, and Entertainment</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 23-31</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Visual Aesthetics: Kimono</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 23-31</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Visual Aesthetics: Obi &amp; Hairstyles</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 30-38</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Visual Aesthetics: Make-up</td>
<td>Readings: Dalby Part III, Iwasaki Ch. 30-38</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Adopt a Maiko Presentations</td>
<td>Prep for Dalby/Iwasaki Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Adopt a Maiko Presentations</td>
<td>Prep for Dalby/Iwasaki Paper</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Movie: Real Geisha, Real Women Discussion of Kyo Odori and Field Trip</td>
<td>Comparison/Contrast Paper due on Dalby/Iwasaki</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>The Geisha Macrocosm</td>
<td>Listen to Podcast of Ex-Geisha Sayuri's Interview</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Role of Geisha in Contemporary Japan; Future of the Geisha; Role of Ookini Zaidan</td>
<td>Prepare Research paper</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Geisha in other Hanamachi</td>
<td>Research Paper Due</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Prep for Final Presentations</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Prep for Final Presentations</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Prep for Final Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentations</td>
<td>Final Presentations Due</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Final 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geisha: 25th Anniversary Edition</td>
<td>Liza Dalby</td>
<td>Univ of California Pr; Anniversary, Updated edition (December 10, 2008)</td>
<td>0520257898; 978-0520257894</td>
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### Additional Readings adapted from:

Section 4
[Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric]

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<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Writing Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Research Paper/Presentation)</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Presentations)</td>
<td>25</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. 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
   1.3.2. 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
      2.1.2.7. Different make-up reflecting difference in seniority
      2.1.2.8. Concept of Misodashi
   2.1.3. Elements of a Geiko’s Wardrobe
      2.1.3.1. Short sleeved Kimono, Taiko-obi
      2.1.3.2. Katsura & other ornament styles
      2.1.3.3. Concept of Erikae
2.1.4. Elements of a Tayu’s Wardrobe
   2.1.4.1. Multi-layered Kimono
   2.1.4.2. Hairstyles
   2.1.4.3. Presence of Kamuro

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 (unique elements)
   2.3.2. Ochaya
   2.3.3. Okiya
   2.3.4. Okami-san
   2.3.5. Onee-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 - Shigyoshi
   2.4.2. January - Hatsuyori
   2.4.3. February - Setsubun/Obake
   2.4.4. April - Annual Dance Performances
   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 - Kani Kaku Ni Sai
   2.4.11. December - Kaomise Souken
   2.4.12. December - Koto Hajime

2.5. Explain relevant terms and concepts
   2.5.1. Ichigen-san 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/Christian 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 Japanese photographer Kusakabe and others 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.

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 and 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 bayashi) (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 from a young girl to an 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 and the Rules of the Geisha world
9.1.3. Daily life as a Shikomi: Introduction to kyo-kotoba
9.1.4. San-san-ku-do ceremony
9.1.5. Misedashi (pictorial explanation of event and new role)

9.2. Graduation to the Master: From Maiko to Geiko

9.2.2. Daily life as a Maiko
9.2.3. Sakkou (Pictorial explanation)
9.2.4. Kurokami (video and symbolism)
9.2.5. Danpatsu-no-shiki (Pictorial explanation of event)
9.2.6. Erikae (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: Becoming a Natori Geiko
9.3.4. Discussion of issues leading to stay/retire
10. Field Trip (April 1-15, exact day TBD): Kyo Odori

11. The Gei of the Geisha

11.1. Creating a world of “Taking care of the hearts of the customers”

11.2. Hospitality & Entertainment
   11.2.1. The art of Omotenashi
   11.2.2. Creating a World of Relaxation through Banter
   11.2.3. Ozashiki asobi

11.3. The Art of Dance and Performance
   11.3.1. Repertoire similarities with the world of Kabuki
   11.3.2. Kyomai & Inoue School of Dance (Gion Kobu)
   11.3.3. Wakayagi & Umemoto Styles (Miyagawa)
   11.3.4. Hanayagi Style (Kamishichiken)
   11.3.5. Onoe Style (Pontocho)
   11.3.6. Fujima Style (Gion Higashi)
   11.3.7. Ceremonial/Temple Performances

11.4. Music of the Geisha
   11.4.1. Ko-uta and Naga-uta adaptations in the Geisha world
   11.4.2. Ko-uta as illustrations of iroke
   11.4.3. Life as a Jikata-san

12. 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.

13. Introducing Geisha in other Parts of Japan
   13.2. Tosa Geisha & Tosa’s culture of Ozashiki

14. Discussion of Current Issues and Role of Geisha in Contemporary Japan

   14.1. The Geisha and Tourism
   14.2. The Geisha and their dependent traditional industries
   14.3. Interactions with the local communities
   14.4. Impact of an aging customer demographic
   14.5. Availability of alternate income generation careers

15. Course Review & Final Exam Preparation