

# A Survey of Japan-related Courses in Short-term Exchange Programs at National Universities in Japan

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Key Words: Japan-related courses, short-term exchange programs

## 1. Introduction

This essay examines the variations and scopes of Japan-related courses offered in short-term exchange programs (the so-called *tanki* program or *tan-puro* in Japanese) at national universities in Japan. The short-term exchange program started about 10 years ago. Currently, 27 national universities in Japan offer a short-term exchange program. The oldest one is Kyushu University's JTW (Japan in Today's World) which started in 1994. Three universities, namely, Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Saitama, started such program in 2004; they are the most recent cases.

The characteristics of the *tan-puro* are by and large similar at most universities. First, the program is intended to offer undergraduate students from overseas universities which, in most cases, have a student exchange agreement with the host universities in Japan, a variety of courses in English, so that they can enroll without prior knowledge of the Japanese language. Second, at many universities, Japanese language lessons are also offered as a part of the curriculum. Third, introducing various aspects of Japan is also a key element of the program. Thus, all programs offer some Japan-related courses. However, the focuses on Japan-related courses vary among programs. It is partly because the areas of specialty vary among universities.

The aim of this essay is twofold. First, it explores what Japan-related courses are currently offered in the *tanki* programs. Second, this essay will provide a broad framework to understand the present trend of Japan

-related courses offered to foreign students through the *tanki* program. Based on the findings, a few issues will be discussed in terms of manners that Japan and its various aspects are introduced to foreign students. This essay hopes to help to keep in perspective the contributions that the short-term exchange programs attempt to make towards the better understanding of Japan for prospective international students who wish to enroll in a short-term exchange program at any university where it is offered.

## 2. Courses Surveyed

In this essay, the contents of Japan-related courses obtained from the universities' home pages on the internet were reviewed and summarized. After browsing the websites of 27 short-term exchange programs, 14 have been selected for the present review. The selection was based on the availability of detailed course outlines, or at least lists of course titles, posted on the websites. Therefore, this survey excluded programs that do not list course titles on the websites, even if they offer Japan-related courses. This is the reason why only 14 programs have been sampled.

I define Japan-related courses as courses (subjects) offered in the short-term exchange programs that are particularly aimed at introducing some aspects of Japan, Japanese society, or specific topics related to the country. More practically, this definition limited the selection of courses to the courses whose titles contain the word Japan or Japanese. For example, the course titles that contain such phrases as "..... of Japan," "..... in Japan," "Japanese .....", and "Japan's ....." were selected. Japanese language courses were excluded from this survey. In this way, a total of 110 courses were surveyed from the 14 programs. The number of courses per program ranges from 3 to 19, with the average of 7.9 courses. These courses are summarized in the table below.

## Classification of Japan Related Courses Offered in Selected Short-term Exchange Programs

Program (University)	Social Sciences	Humanities	Natural Sciences
EPOK, Exchange Program of Okayama (Okayama)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Political Economy of Modern Japan</li> <li>-Japanese Industry and Technological Fundamentals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Culture and Society of Japan</li> </ul>	
HUSTEP, Hokkaido University Short-term Exchange Program (Hokkaido)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japanese Economy</li> <li>-Japanese International Cooperation Today</li> <li>-Issues in Contemporary Japanese Society</li> <li>-Japanese Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Comparing Japan with the Outside</li> <li>-History of Japanese Art and Architecture</li> <li>-Education and Society in Post-War Japan</li> <li>-<i>Japonism</i>: Culture Meetings between Japan and the West</li> <li>-Women in Modern Japan</li> </ul>	
JOY, Junior Year Overseas (Yokohama National)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japan and the East Asian Economies</li> <li>-Japan and the World Economy</li> <li>-Japan and the American Occupation</li> <li>-National Accounting of Japan</li> <li>-Japanese Corporations</li> <li>-Contemporary Economic Issues in Japan</li> <li>-Cost Management of Japanese Companies</li> <li>-Japanese Economy, Industry and Corporation</li> <li>-Japanese Management</li> <li>-Japanese Production Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japanese Society and Culture</li> <li>-Japanese Traditional Culture</li> <li>-Rethinking Japan through Histories of Japan-US Relations</li> <li>-War and Imperialism in Modern Japan</li> <li>-Structure of Spoken Japanese</li> <li>-Postwar Japanese History</li> <li>-Japanese School Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japanese Automobile Technology</li> <li>-Electronics Industry in Japan</li> </ul>
JTW, Japan in Today's World (Kyushu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japanese Crime and Criminal Justice</li> <li>-Introduction to Japanese Economics</li> <li>-Seminar on the Japanese Economy</li> <li>-Seminar on Japanese Politics Today</li> <li>-Japanese Economics</li> <li>-Gender in Contemporary Japan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japanese Life through Tea Ceremony</li> <li>-Introduction to Japanese Films</li> <li>-Linguistic Description of Japanese</li> <li>-Introduction to Japanese Literature</li> <li>-Japan as Anthropological Object</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Pharmaceutical Sciences in Today's Japan</li> <li>-Medicine in Japan</li> </ul>

IPOU, International Program Oita University (Oita)	-Employment and Industrial Relations in Japan	-Japanese Literature and Performing Arts -Japanese Studies: History, Culture and Contemporary Society -Contemporary Japanese Studies -Modern Japanese Art History -Japanese Popular Culture: Manga, Animation and Massmedia	
ISEP, International Student Exchange Program (Tokyo Gakugei)	-Japanese Business Enterprises -Comparative Family Studies: Japan's Case	-Contemporary Japanese Culture -Japanese Culture: Kanji of Japan -Introduction to Japanese music -Philosophy and Ethics in Japan -Introduction to Japanese History -Education in Japan -Geography of Japan	
KUINEP, Kyoto University International Education Program (Kyoto)	-Global Economy and Japanese Business -Law and Politics in Japan -Society and Region in Modern Japan	-Japanese Culture and Arts	-Geological Aspects of Japanese Islands
KUSEP, Kanazawa University Student Exchange Program (Kanazawa)		-Japanese ways of Thinking and Japanese Culture -Geo-trip in Japan -Contemporary Japanese Literature in Transition -Introduction to Modern Japanese Culture and Society -Language and Culture of Japan	-Current Health Topics in Japan -Development of Pharmaceutical Science in Japan -Nature of Japan: Environmental Monitoring and Preservation

<p>NUPACE, Nagoya University Program for Academic Exchange (Nagoya)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Introduction to Japanese Politics</li> <li>-Introduction to the Japanese Economy</li> <li>-Modern Japan and its Post WWII International Relations</li> <li>-Japan as an International Society: A Socio-legal Perspective</li> <li>-Japan's Development Experience</li> <li>-Politics and Law in Japan</li> <li>-Contemporary Japanese Society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Introduction to Japanese History</li> <li>-Advanced Studies in Japanese Language and Culture</li> <li>-Education in Japan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Science and Technology in Japan</li> </ul>
<p>OUSSEP, Osaka University Short-term Student Exchange Program (Osaka)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japanese Legal/Political System and Culture</li> <li>-Health Services and Medical Care in Japan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japanese Literature, Modern and Contemporary</li> <li>-Media and Communication in Japan</li> <li>-Perspectives from Inside and Out: An Introduction to Contemporary Japanese Culture and Society</li> <li>-Inside Japanese Arts</li> <li>-Japan: Society and Ideology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Innovative Japanese Technologies in 3M-based Engineering</li> </ul>
<p>SPACE, Saga University Program for Academic Exchange (Saga)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Capital Market in Japan</li> <li>-The Social Structure of Japan's Health Care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japan and Southeast Asia in the Colonial and Postcolonial World</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Vegetables in Japan</li> <li>-Introduction to Japanese Agriculture</li> </ul>
<p>SSWAN, Short-term Study and Work Experience at Niigata University (Niigata)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Introduction to Japanese Law</li> <li>-Japanese Economic History</li> <li>-Local Government in Japan</li> <li>-Introduction to Japanese Public Administration</li> <li>-Japanese International Taxation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Japan from Outsiders' Point of View</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Environmental Issues in Japan: The History of the Environmental Problems and Development of Policies</li> </ul>

STEPS, Short-term Exchange Program at Saitama University (Saitama)	-Introduction to the Japanese Economy	-Japanese Traditional Culture	-Science in Japan
YOUC, A Year at Otaru University of Commerce (Otaru U. Commerce)	-Japanese Economy -Introduction to Japanese Management -Japanese Companies in Global Business	-Japanese Affairs	

### 3. Classification of Japan-Related Courses

The total of 110 courses are sorted by three disciplinary categories which are conventionally used in the university education system: social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. The social sciences category included 48 course titles. In the humanities category, 48 courses have been found as well. Finally, there are 14 courses in the natural sciences category. In what follows, findings about each disciplinary category are presented.

*Social Sciences:* Included in the Social Sciences category are political science, economics, business administration, sociology, psychology, and law. I have found two major groups of Japan-related courses in this category. The first is a group of courses which introduce some particular aspects or characteristics of Japanese economy. There are 11 Japanese economy related courses, such as “Introduction to Japanese Economy.” The scopes of these courses range from Japanese economic history to contemporary economic issues in Japan. The major topics dealt with include the process of Japan’s economic development, reasons for Japan’s high economic performance until recently, and its decline in the following recession period. The courses entitled “Japanese Economy” or “Introduction to Japanese Economy” offered by HUSTEP, YOUC, STEPS, and NUPACE all deal with such aspects of Japanese Economy.

Second, I have found 11 courses related to Japanese business management. Out of these 11 courses, four are offered by the JOY program at Yokohama National University, including “Japanese Corporations,” Cost Management of Japanese Companies, “Japanese Management,” and “Japanese Production Management.” They introduce to international students key issues relating to Japanese corporations, their practices of cost management, corporate strategies, and production systems. On the contrary to the first group of economics courses, these courses concentrate more specifically on the characteristics of business and production activities pursued by Japanese corporate enterprises. Other programs that offer Japanese business management include ISEP and YOUC. The latter offers two courses on Japanese business management: “Introduction to Japanese

Management” and “Japanese Companies in Global Business.”

While nearly half of the courses in this category deal with Japanese economy and business, sociology and political science courses are also found. In sociology, gender and family issues are important topics necessary to understand contemporary Japanese society. Thus, JTW offers “Gender in Contemporary Japan” and ISEP offers “Comparative Family Studies: Japan’s Case.” Six courses have been found in the area of political science, including “Law and Politics in Japan” (KUINEP), “Introduction to Japanese Politics” (NUPACE), “Politics and Law in Japan” (NUPACE), “Japanese Legal/Political System” (OUSSEP), “Local Government in Japan” (SSWAN), and “Introduction to Japanese Public Administration” (SSWAN).

*Humanities:* The Humanities category includes mainly history, literature, and cultural studies. The most popular course in this category is “Introduction to Japanese Culture” or courses with the related title. The majority of the programs in this category focus on Japanese culture. Many of them provide international students with opportunities to explore both traditional and contemporary Japanese cultures. Courses of this kind usually include explanations about how Japanese culture is different from other cultures. That is, the particular aspects of Japanese culture are emphasized. All programs surveyed offer at least one course introducing Japanese culture.

Some programs also offer courses on Japanese history. For example, ISEP and NUPACE offer a course “Introduction to Japanese History.” JOY offers three courses introducing historical aspects of Japan, including “Rethinking Japan through Histories of Japan-US Relations,” “War and Imperialism in Modern Japan,” and “Postwar Japanese History.”

Finally, four courses with a special focus on the Japanese education system have been found. They include “Education and Society in Post-War Japan” offered by HUSTEP, “Japanese School Education” by JOY, “Education in Japan” by ISEP and NUPACE. For example, JOY’s course deals with Japanese education particularly at the elementary and secondary

levels. As such, international students are expected to experience the real atmosphere of some Japanese schools through field visits. Meanwhile, NUPACE introduces education in Japan from both historical and comparative aspects. Thus, students have opportunities to compare the Japanese education system with education systems in their own countries.

*Natural Sciences:* Fourteen courses have been found in this category. There are five programs that do not offer any Japan-related courses related to natural sciences; they are EPOK, HUSTEP, IPOU, ISEP, and YOUC. Popular courses in this category are courses on Japanese engineering. For example, JOY offers two courses on this area: “Japanese Automobile Technology” and “Electronics Industry in Japan.” The former traces the historical progress of the Japanese automobile industry, while the latter explores the historical development in the Japanese electronics industry since the invention of transistor in the early 1950s. NUPACE also offers a course on Japanese technology, “Science and Technology in Japan.” This course traces the history of the development of science and technology in Japan. Finally, OUSSEP offers a course on engineering entitled “Innovative Japanese Technologies in 3M-based Engineering,” that aims at introducing mechanical, material, and manufacturing technologies that have drastically changed the world.

Two courses which introduce Japanese pharmaceutical sciences have been found in this category. Kanazawa University’s KUSEP offers “Development of Pharmaceutical Science in Japan,” which introduces students to a wide range of pharmaceutical topics studied in Japan, including drug dispensing, creation of new drugs, and current usage of traditional Chinese medicine. JTW at Kyushu University also offers “Pharmaceutical Sciences in Today’s Japan,” though the contents are not specified in the program pamphlet.

Finally, a unique course found in the natural sciences category is “Introduction to Japanese Agriculture” offered by SPACE. The aim of this course is to provide students with knowledge of agriculture and agricultural policies in Japan.

#### **4. Japan-Related Courses in Nagasaki University Short-term Exchange Program**

Nagasaki University started the short-term exchange program called, Nagasaki University International Student Program (NISP), in 2004. NISP aims at providing undergraduate students from overseas universities with Japanese language lessons and lectures on Japanese and Nagasaki's culture and other topics related to Japan as well as courses related to students' academic backgrounds. This section introduces some Japan-related courses offered by NISP.

The social sciences discipline contributes two Japan-related courses to this program. First, "Sociology of Japanese Families" aims at providing students with knowledge of the Japanese family system and introducing issues surrounding families in contemporary Japan, such as delayed marriage and low fertility. In its first year (2004-2005), this course had seven students enrolled and 12 students in the second year. Second, "Culture, Society and Economy in Japan" is offered in the form of an omnibus course, in which some lecturers mainly from the Faculty of Environmental Sciences and the Faculty of Economics introduce a variety of topics related to contemporary Japanese society, including, for example, food and clothing, education, economy, environmental policies, literature, and international role. This course had 10 students in both first and second years.

There are two courses in the humanities discipline: "Japanese Linguistics" and "Japanese Animation". The former intends to familiarize students with the basic structure of Japanese. The aim of "Japanese Animation" is to provide students with a general idea of Japanese animation and modern Japanese culture by discussing Japanese animation works that are popular around the world, especially in the United States. This course began to be offered to the second batch (2005-2006) of NISP students, of which 16 students are currently enrolled.

NISP offers two Japan-related courses in the natural sciences discipline. First, "Civil Engineering in Japan" introduces the latest technologies used in civil engineering with examples in Japan. Second, "Dental Research

in Japan” provides an overview of basic dental research in Japan including oral pathology, oral microbiology, and oral biochemistry.

Besides the courses mentioned above, NISP offers a course that introduces students to Nagasaki’s unique history and culture along with providing an opportunity to consider the reality and meaning of the atomic bombing in Nagasaki. The title of the course is “Thinking about Peace in Nagasaki.” The course offers lectures given mainly by outside guest speakers and field visits to various places related to the atomic bombing. This course had nine students in 2004-05 and 16 students in 2005-06. Though in a very specific way, “Thinking about Peace in Nagasaki” plays an important role in introducing Japanese history to international students.

## 5. Discussion

Before I conducted this mini survey, I had imagined that the courses in the short-term exchange programs were almost randomly created and offered. I thought, as in Nagasaki University’s NISP, that presumably the variations of courses depend largely on the availability of instructors who can offer courses in English. Through this survey, however, I have found some interesting features with respect to the courses offered in the short-term exchange programs.

First, the numbers of courses in the social sciences and the humanities are well balanced, with 48 courses each. This means that both disciplines can equally contribute to Japan-related courses, although some programs have unbalanced numbers of courses between the two disciplines; this is to say, more social sciences or more humanities.

The second finding is that within the social sciences discipline, there are two popular concentrations. The first is the group of courses introducing Japanese economy and the second concentration is the group of courses dealing with Japanese business management. At a glance, the courses in the social sciences discipline seem to be diverse; however, nearly half of the courses offered in this category teach either Japanese economy or Japanese business. This may coincide with the popularity of such courses, which is

derived from students' interest in and the necessity of the knowledge of Japanese business management. For example, most of the participants of NISP at Nagasaki University show a strong intention to work for a Japanese company after graduation; it is thus indispensable for them to be familiar with Japanese business systems and customs.

Third, Japanese cultural studies are another area that all the short-term exchange programs offer. The scope and coverage of the courses vary among programs, however. Some courses include traditional cultures, while others focus more on contemporary cultural aspects of Japan. No matter what concentration the courses demonstrate, judging from the fact that one of the objectives for most short-term exchange programs is to introduce Japanese culture or society, it is expected that the courses on Japanese cultural studies will continue to exist as the core course for all short-term exchange programs.

Finally, 14 Japan-related courses were found in the natural sciences category. This number is rather less than expected. From this result two types of interpretation are possible. First, most natural sciences courses are universal, and it is not necessary to teach them particularly in the Japanese context. In fact, there are some other natural sciences courses that do not include the word "Japan" or "Japanese" in their titles. Second, as Hanami and Nishitani (1997) point out, students majoring in natural sciences are not so interested in studying *about* Japan, although some of them may be interested in studying their major subjects *in* Japan. Thus, the lack of explicit demands may have partly influenced the less number of Japan-related courses in the natural sciences category.

## References

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