This course explores the encounter of people of Asian and people of African descent from a global and comparative perspective. Our emphasis for this semester will be on the comparative history and culture of Japanese and African Americans. We will focus on how ‘modernization’ impacted the lives of ‘ordinary’ people, how they responded to it and the meaning and significance of their responses for us.

By Way of Definition

By African descent populations I mean Africans and African emigrants and their descendants. I limit this definition to the period after the original migrations of human ancestors from Africa and the subsequent emergence of diverse human populations around the globe. Before that prehistoric migration we cannot speak of African and Asian connections. By Asian descent populations I mean Asians and Asian emigrants and their descendants. By Afro-Asian, or Black/Asian relations, or encounters, I mean primarily symbolic connections, such as expressions of solidarity between blacks and Asians, literary or filmic representations, or, in particular, the comparative study of African and Asian history. I recognize the problematic nature of the terms African, Asian, and black, particularly the dangers of applying them anachronistically. Nonetheless, we will use the terms for convenience, being careful to avoid essentializing the populations referred to. Indeed, one goal of this course is to call attention to the problems and limitations inherent in all such putative collective identities.

Course Requirements

The basic requirement for this course is the careful (close) reading and analysis of required texts. The readings will form the basis for the weekly class discussions around which the course is organized. To facilitate this work and to encourage intellectual exchange you should each maintain a journal of notes and ideas inspired and provoked by your reading. The journal would serve as the foundation of your weekly contributions to class discussion. It will not be evaluated or graded.
All students are required to complete two, three-to-five page book reviews, present a ten to fifteen minute oral presentation and submit a final research paper of from ten to fifteen pages. Your paper must be on a topic directly related to the subject matter of the course. Ideally it should emerge from your engagement with our class discussions. I will discuss the paper with in more detail during class Session 2 as indicated on the course outline that follows. Each of you must have your topic and research plan approved by me in advance of your work on the paper. I will not accept a paper on a topic I have not approved in advance. You must have your paper topic approved by me by February 28. The final paper will be due in class on Tuesday May 1. The book reviews and the final paper must be typed or machine printed in double-spacing and must be in a font no smaller than size 11. Your grade will be computed on the following basis.

- Book Reviews. 30%
- Research paper 40%
- Class participation (including your oral presentation) 30%

I will accept late work without penalty in cases of documented medical emergencies. In all other cases I will not accept late work unless I feel that the circumstances merit it.

**Academic honesty.**

This course operates under the policies of the College of Arts and Science in regard to academic honesty. An automatic grade of F will be given in any case of plagiarism. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of the Dean of the College.

**Required Texts**

The following texts are required for this course. I have provided ISBN numbers in case you wish to order the texts online.

- Susan Burns, *Before the Nation*, 2003, Duke, isbn 0822331721
- Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*, 1993, University of California, isbn 0520201701
- Emily Groszos Ooms, *Women and Millenarian Protest in Meiji Japan*, 1993 Cornell, isbn 0939657619
Course Outline

Session.1. Orientation.

Session.2. The Making of ‘Modern’ Japan: An Overview; Discussion of guidelines for the Research paper
   Reading: Ian Buruma, *Inventing Japan*.

Session.3. The African American Experience in Japan
   Film: *Struggle and Success: The African American Experience in Japan*; and *Doubles. Japan and America’s Interracial Children*.

Session.4. Japanese Folk Religion
   Reading: Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*.

Session.5. Slave Religion
   Reading: Raboteau, *Slave Religion*.

Session.6. The Nationalizing Spirit

Session.7. The Nationalizing Spirit

Session.8. A Nation Within. After Slavery

Session.9. The Terror. The Destruction of Reconstruction.

Session.10. Inventing the Racial State, Japan, Part One.
   Reading: Burns, *Before the Nation*.

Session.11. Inventing Histories, Japanese and African Americans.
   Reading: Tanaka, *Japan’s orient* (Chapters to be Assigned); Moses, *Afrotopia* (Chapters to be Assigned); Ooms, *Women and Millenarian Protest in Meiji Japan*, Chapter

Session. 12. The Culture of the Folk. America, Part One.
   Reading: Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*.

Session. 13. The Culture of the Folk. America, Part Two.
   Reading: Levine, *Black Culture And Black Consciousness*.

   Reading: Tanizaki, *Naomi*.