

MEIJI GAKUIN COURSE 3507/3508

MID-TERM EXAM

December 3, 2012

Answer **ALL** the questions in Section A.

Meiji Gakuin students: Answer **ONE** of the questions in Section B.

University of California students: Answer **TWO** of the questions in Section B.

Try not to spend more than 20 minutes on Section A.

To get a good score in section B, you need to write an essay of at least one or two pages per question. Opinions are welcome but should be supported by evidence.

Section A (10 marks)

1. Give two examples of what is called “*mono no aware*.”
2. Name two objections to Nihonjinron.
3. (a) What is the population of Japan? (b) How many of the people are foreigners (defined as people with non-Japanese nationality)?
4. When did the Japanese economic bubble burst, starting the “lost decade” of stagnant growth?
5. Give one example each of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ control systems.
6. By international standards, is Japan’s prison population (a) high (b) average, or (c) low?
7. What is a *keiretsu*?
8. What is a typical present that a newspaper company gives to people who buy a subscription?
9. Kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, university. Which two of these five levels of education is dominated by the private sector in Japan?
10. Rank these three newspapers in order of circulation – *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, *Yomiuri*. For a bonus point, match them with their political position: left, right, centre.

Section B (20 marks)

1. “If Nihonjinron is so wrong, how come it is so popular?” Answer this question, including reasons both why some people think Nihonjinron is wrong, and why it remains popular.
2. Is it fair to describe Japan today as a multicultural society?
3. “Compared to other capitalist countries, Japan has a similar class system, cloaked in a different way of expressing socioeconomic class through cultural status.” Discuss.
4. “Japanese culture controls people so effectively that there is no need for harsh laws and heavy punishments.” What do you think of this opinion?
5. Everywhere in the world, people transact things – buying and selling, exchanging presents, etc. Is there anything special about how transactions happen in Japan?
6. Describe the Japanese education system and discuss how it changes from kindergarten to graduate school.
7. “Even today, many Japanese women stay at home and are supported by their husbands. They have very few children to care for and small but modern dwellings that they can easily clean with high-tech domestic appliances. They typically control the family budget. They have plenty of leisure and live longer lives than anyone else in the world. Their husbands work much harder and on average die seven years younger than them. Japanese women are to be envied, not pitied.” Discuss.
8. Many books have been discussed and recommended in this course. Write an account of one of those books, or another book relating to contemporary Japanese culture and society that you have read. Include the key points and your critical response. You may discuss two or more books if you wish.
9. Two documentary films have been shown during this course: *The Emperors’ Naked Army Marches On* (1986) and *311* (2011). Briefly describe both films, and explain what insights they give us into contemporary Japanese culture and society. Include any differences between Japan in 1986 and 2011 that you noticed.