Syllabus — Version 1

JAPAN 159
Contemporary Japanese Literature ("J159Fa20—Ōe")

Fall 2020

Instructor: John R Wallace

1. Course SPACES

We have four course spaces. All are digital.

1.1. Zoom sessions (our "classroom")

Regular class sessions happen here, as do office hour and other meetings. Zoom sessions are recorded and uploaded to Kaltura.

1.2. My public website hosted by Sonic.net

In this course we call it "**Sonic**" (http://www.sonic.net/~tabine/) — This is our main course page that has links to the syllabus and such, and details as to what needs to be done for the next session, and much else.

1.3. Our bCourse class site + Kaltura

Announcements, assignment instructions / submission portals, grade reports, most course files, and some other material. Kaltura is accessed through bCourse and is the repository of the video material used for the course.

1.4. Our course Google Drive folders

These include the "Backup Schedule," collaborative documents, and so on.

2. COMMUNICATION

2.1. Contacting me / meeting with me

My email is jwallace@berkeley.edu.

> **I would like to ask that you not message me** either using my private account, or the appointment software, or via bCourse. Please use email. The exception is for minor things related to a specific assignment when messaging from the bCourse comments box makes sense.

My office hours, any last-minute changes to them, and how to request a meeting are listed at Sonic. Please don't rely on the department's webpage listing.

2.2. Announcements (read them!)

Information about class activity (what to do, assignment instructions, due dates, grading explanations, test information, etc.) will come to you through four channels:

1. In-class announcements

2. bCourse announcements (arrives to you as an email notice and remains accessible on the bCourse site)

> Because, as an active learning classroom, we are already very busy with activities, and because I think all of you are good readers, **I rarely make announcements in class. It is unwise to assume that in-class announcements are sufficient for navigating the course and meeting deadlines. If you encounter a grade disadvantage because you did not read the announcements, that disadvantage will not be corrected. Please read announcements. I will not spam you.**

2.3. "How do I know what to do for each class session?"

This is an active learning course with many assignments and associated tasks. Some of these are just to be done, others require some sort of submission.

2.3.1. Assignments that are "Just to be done" (no submission)

FOR CLASS SESSIONS — Session Details will have a list of things to be done, at the entry for the day in question. It can be updated up to 24-hours ahead of a class. If there is nothing there ("lorem" is still everywhere), check the Backup Schedule (use the button at the top of Session Details). If there is nothing there, then there is no expectation by me of preparation.

FOR GROUP WORK — If there is something to be done ahead of a meeting, you will know.

> Be sure to arrive at meetings well prepared. This has a substantial effect on your final course grade. Arriving to a class session unprepared reduces the quality of a class session but arriving to a group meeting unprepared can cripple the meeting which affects the grade of other students. I am protective of their grades. Arrive prepared for the group meeting.

2.3.2. Assignments that require a submission and their deadlines

All assignment submissions are through bCourse. All assignments have due times.

> Regardless of the assignment, no late material is accepted.
>
> Regardless of the assignment, all assignments must be submitted to bCourse, no where else. I do not accept late material via emails.

My orientation video on assignments has more details.

DUE TIMES WARNING — If a bCourse box locks at, say, 10:58AM, that means you have until 10:57:59AM to submit, NOT 10:58:something. ALSO, remember the bCourse does not process your submit request quickly. For these reasons:

> **When it is an important assignment, submit something even if unfinished early so that if there is a submission issue at least you have something submitted.**
>
> When it is an important and large assignment, allow a 20-minute time buffer for the last submission.
>
> When it is other assignments, I suggest a 2- to 3-minute time buffer is usually enough but this is your call, not mine. It depends on your internet connection.

DUE TIMES are managed somewhat non-intuitively in my courses.

> The time the bCourse submission box locks is the real due time.

However, I will set a due time at 11:59PM on the day before so that it shows on your calendar on that day. This is because my usual due times are 2AM, 6AM or about an hour before a class. In all of these cases, if you wake up in the morning and see an assignment due for that day, it is possible it is already too late to complete it. Thus the 11:59PM night-before strategy. bCourse will mark it late, of course. Just ignore its silliness.

2.4. "Google Form" for missed or late sessions / assignments

> When you have missed or arrived late to a class, or know that you will, you can complete the "Google Form for late / missed classes or assignments."
>
> When you have been unable to submit an assignment, in this case, too, you are welcome to complete the same form.

The button linking to the form is on the Session Details page. Completing the form can help your final grade or an assignment grade. However, completing this form does not, of itself, generate an excused absence or assignment adjustment. **I do not read this form until the end of the term. So, if there is something I should know before that ALSO email me, but do not skip the form.**

2.5. Feedback

2.5.1. Feedback on assignments

As long as there is no vaccine for COVID-19 I have reduced my workload to remain healthy and strong. One area in which this reduction might influence your directly is in a reduced amount of feedback that I write and send to students. If, AFTER AN ASSIGNMENT IS GRADED, you have specific feedback that you would like to have — not necessarily grade-related but it can be — please complete this "assignment" on bCourse.

2.5.2. General feedback

I am happy to talk with you anytime about the class and your performance in it in more general ways. My grading system is unlikely to provide an early estimate of a grade that is useful for add/drop or grade option decisions but we can try. Schedule office hours and let me know ahead of time. Students often just ask out of the blue "What is my current grade?" I don't have that information but, given a few days' notice, it is possible I can get to a good estimate.

4. Course DESCRIPTION

This class provides an opportunity to read and discuss novels and short stories by Ōe Kenzaburō 大江健三郎 (1935–). We read primarily fiction written in since 1957 and before 1994 (when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature). We read both in English translation and his original modern Japanese.

Our approach is to engage a specific set of his ideas. We explore these both in depth as well as consider their "evolution" across his writing career. This class is quasi-seminar style, emphasizing not just Ōe's ideas but the process of learning through critical reading, the exchange of ideas with others, and written expression.

5. PREREQUISITES

None. All are welcome. (Fall 2020 only)

6. COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND THE ROLE OF ENGAGEMENT IN ACHIEVING THOSE OBJECTIVES

All assignments that are graded (usually), even when there are more specific grading rubrics, keep the below objectives in mind and the final grade is heavily influenced by an answer to such questions as "Did the student master (come to know well) ...?" or "Did the student learn X skill or, if already skilled at that skill did the student make good effort to further improve it?" and so on.

Thus,

> … now and then during the course, the student should review the below objectives and measure progress against them. However, SKILLS objectives are often but not always "finish line" assessments, so "progress" means to achieve a certain level of mastery by the time of the final assessment.

6.1. Engagement

6.1.2. What I mean by "engagement" and its importance to the final grade

> The ENGAGMENT component is the dominant element of the portfolio. The student's grade for this element guides my thinking on determining the grades for the other two components and is decided before those other two are determined.

Engagement is assessed in terms of:

- the student's **level of preparation** for a session

- engagement in regular sessions through on-time **attendance** (or attendance substitution), remaining throughout the session, **speaking and listening with care, avoiding multitasking**,

- **consistent completion of assignments** and the energy brought to them

- **facilitation** of learning (flexibility in meeting times, on-time arrival having prepared for the session, un-interrupted attendance of the full session, and participation through speaking and listening in small group work in a process-oriented (lively dialogue), not product-oriented (completing the assignment) way

- **learning initiative**

- **curiosity** in course content and course themes (as evidenced through discussions, emails, office hours, assignment content)

- **energy** brought to the classroom and assignments.

Since most learning in this class happens outside the range of what I can assess, the engagement grade helps me come to conclusions as to how much knowledge is being obtained, even if not assessed directly. And it should go without saying that engagement leads to better skill development.

6.1.3. Active learning in this course

Some of the learning objectives in my courses concern mastering knowledge delivered through lecture, assigned reading, or discussion. Other learning objectives set the development of skills as the goal. Either way, "active learning" in my courses reaches across three phases of the learning process:

1. **acquiring** knowledge through listening, reading, and discussion, or practicing skills for the first time

2. **working with** course content to bring texture and nuance to knowledge content, or improve skills, and

3. **producing** knowledge* of value to others through analysis.

Use of active learning in my courses for mastering content

ACQUISITION — Done with care, critical judgment, self-initiative

ENHANCEMENT — Discussions & exercises to add complexity to course content, and develop skills

PRODUCTION — New knowledge creation (analysis)

*"Knowledge" means, in this case, your *carefully considered and critically solid analysis* (=observations, interpretations, tentative conclusions).
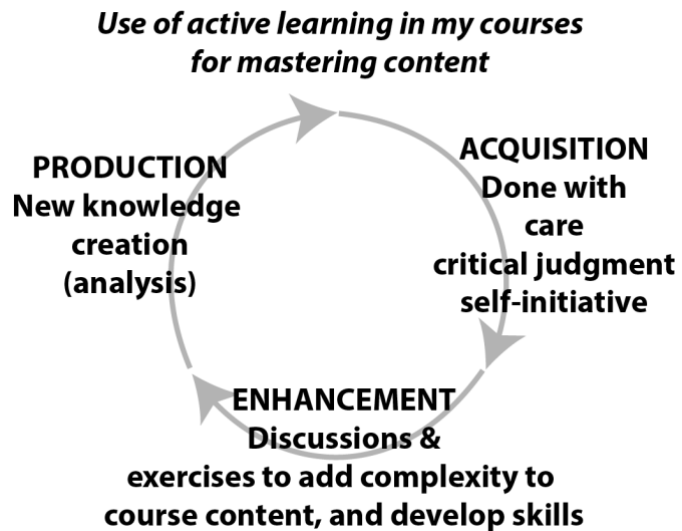
Employing self-initiative and critical judgment in KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION.

- Careful preparation positions you to better understand the significance of lecture or discussion content, and contribute in ways that advances the knowledge acquisition of others.

  > I watch carefully for how well students have prepared.

- Engaging lectures, feedback, and discussions (peer-to-peer or with me, either way) as a learning opportunities. If I have provided feedback to you personally or the group as a whole, reading it and taking note of it can at times be fundamental to my grade calculations.

  > Always check your assignments for feedback, even if, in terms of frequency it is rare. I must budget my grading time quite carefully. f I have taken time to say something, there is usually a very good reason for doing so. Either you are on track and I want to confirm that, or you are headed in a direction that can reduce your grade in the future, and I want you to know.

- Dynamic engagement beyond the "letter" of the assignment that is guided by curiosity, creativity, and energy rather than curt responses, rushed responses, or other responses to prompts that seem aimed at the practical goal or "getting the assignment done" rather than learning from it.

- I expect all students to problem-solve or ask along the way, when things are not clear.

  > If something is missing, ask me rather than feel lucky that it has not been uploaded yet, or whatever.

- When you don't know something, look it up. The best students acquire knowledge beyond what I have specifically outlined or stated.

- Learn what seems to be good to learn, not what I tell you to learn.

ENRICHING UNDERSTANDING and ACQUIRING SKILLS through experimentation, discussion, and practice.

- I view active engagement in discussions and exercises as key to the learning process.

- I assess both your speaking and listening activity.

- All discussion, even peer-to-peer discussions, is course content and might be later assessed or required to be used in some way.

- Nearly all exercises cannot be done unless there is good preparation. When students do not prepare, it is a liability to the entire learning environment and a grade negative for that student.

- Most of my learning activities and grading rubrics are process-oriented, not product-oriented.

> Getting quickly to the product, by whatever means, generally scores low. Process-rich discussion and the completion of exercises score high.

PRODUCING (constructing) NEW KNOWLEDGE.

- Analysis will be your combination of understanding the *significance* of the material you are working with and developing observations, interpretations and/or tentative conclusions via a specified method.

> To earn a final grade within the "A" grade band, you will need to show that you can work accurately and meaningfully with course information and concepts from the perspective of understanding the *significance* of the content. That understanding is developed by you, on your own. I cannot teach it directly. It is the result of you working with the material directly.
>
> … A passing grade requires that at least you have made sufficient effort in this direction.

6.2. Knowledge

Students will be able to describe in some detail the basic events of Ōe's life, his artistic and philosophical interests, some of his major works, and his writing style.

Students will know important aspects of elements important to Ōe's writings including but not limited to grotesque realism, existentialism, and aspects of works by a number of authors, especially William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor.

Students will have a detailed understanding of how their peers think about major themes in Ōe's works.

6.3. Skills

These skills will be developed:

- deploying analysis that is the result of the student and the group's sustained, careful thinking on a limited number of topics

- collaborative work in a humanities learning environment

7. GRADES

7.1. Grading in a remote learning environment

For my style of teaching and my teaching goals I have identified these three areas that need proactive attention: learning community (our classroom), academic integrity, and assessments (tests).

Learning community. Students will be graded more extensively on how much they have contributed to enriching our classroom learning environment. It is the responsibility of me as an instructor and you as a student to work together to create a learning environment that is effective and stimulating regardless of the limitations imposed by Zoom sessions. You will be graded on this and it will matter in terms of your final grade.

Academic integrity. Similarly, because it is much more difficult to safely assume that students are conducting themselves with honesty, I will be more vigilant than in the past and the penalties will be more severe and the remedies will be quite limited. In most cases if I even allow an assignment to be redone it will be in real-time with me on Zoom, regardless of your time zone. Please note that my posture will be cautious and skeptical equally towards all students, to avoid unfair treatment. Please do not take it personally.

Let me go on record: to take advantage of the current situation to proceed with academic dishonesty is, in my opinion, unacceptable behavior at a time when we are all trying to make this work, even when we are all over-worked. The pandemic is not an excuse to cheat. If you are having difficulties, contact me. We can work things out. This is a time when we need to work together, not take advantage of one another. I have a negative attitude towards dishonesty in general but at this time my feelings are very strong.

Assessments. Finally, I have shifted my emphasis from quizzes and tests to projects, with that quality of work assessed through a combination of submitted material and one-on-one interviews about that material. This places a greater burden on students in a number of ways:

- students must self-motivate rather than have an up-coming quiz motivate their learning,

- students might be less clear as to whether the material has been mastered or not so should be more proactive in scheduling office hours with me to discuss things, and

- students will have a more limited ability to know how they stand grade-wise in a course.

On the other hand, I recognize that at this time of the pandemic students are might be confronted with beyond-the-usual challenges, and, further, that the intensity of these challenges are unequally distributed among my students. This is having a profound impact on how I teach. I have reduced course content to what I

consider are the essentials. Also, I am more cautious about concluding that something "should have been done" or "should have been understood."

7.2. Explanation of portfolio grades

Observation, assignments and more formal assessments are reviewed at the end of the term to determine a course grade. This data is used to answer three basic questions:

1. Was the student engaged in the course?

2. Did the student make progress in mastering the core material (for a passing grade) or all material (for an "A"-level grade) stated as the knowledge learning objectives?

3. Did the student develop the basics of the learning-objective skills (for a passing grade) or show expertise in those skills (for an "A"-level grade)?

Thus, a student's grade is the result of a calculation based on three sub-grades:

<p align="center">course ENGAGEMENT</p>

<p align="center">KNOWLEDGE gained</p>

<p align="center">SKILLS learned</p>

7.3. Portfolio grade weights for this course: ENGAGEMENT—50% KNOWLEDGE—40% SKILLS—10%

The relative weights for these three grades, for this course, are as above. I've put them in the sub-section heading so that can be quickly viewed in the Table of Contents, without navigating this document.

7.4. "Syllabus, Part 2"

This document has the full description of how I calculate grades, percent tables, and so on.

7.5. "Grade ceilings"

Final course grades begin with a calculation of the portfolio grade. In most cases this is the grade reported to the university. However, there are some behaviors that place a limit on how high the grade can be regardless of numerical calculations. I call these behaviors or events "grade ceilings." I use grade ceiling at the level of assignments as well. This just describes those that affect the final, overall course grade.

Multitasking during class: This creates a general skepticism that beyond-the-session/classroom work is being done as attentively as it should, on the assumption that a student who multitasks during a class is highly likely to approach at-home work in the same way. This skepticism can affect a number of judgment grades having to do with engagement and knowledge, and, as well, lead to an overall depressive effect on the course grade. It is unlikely the student can score higher than an "A-" in the course, even for slight multitasking in class.

Significant academic dishonesty: If the event has not caused a fail in the course already, it is unlikely the student can score higher than a "B-" for the course even if the event itself has been discussed and resolved since there will be lingering doubts about the integrity of all other assignments.

Moderate or minor academic dishonesty: My usual practice at the end of the term—"Upwards" rounding of grades that are difficult to determine or sit on a borderline—is abandoned. Further, general extra credit (GenEC), if any, is no longer calculated into the grade. Further, it is unlikely the student can score higher than a "B+" regardless of the calculated grade.

Significant number of unexcused late arrivals and/or early departures creates a grade ceiling of "A-."

7.6. Letter grade prose descriptions

"A+" — Exemplary students, not based on points but rather on students' evident grasp of the deep principles and often also referencing their ability to raise the learning environment for others in the room through their preparation and participation. Still, students who don't connect well with others but have plunged into the course material and grasped it well are definitely candidates for "A+" as well. Consistent effort is obviously necessary. A few flashy accomplishments will not be enough. Top scores on the assessments is not enough.

"High-A" — This is a common grade on assignments and assessments but not an official University grade. "High-A" tells the student that they have performed with excellence but there was someone in the room that went even above and beyond what they accomplished. "High-A" scores are helpful in grade calculations because of their higher point value on my gradebook Excel sheet, compared to "A." Also, students with a final grade sheet course average of "High-A" will be considered as a possible "A+" candidates since it is quite difficult to end a semester with this high an average across all exercises, assignments, and assessments. The final course grade for submission to the University for a student with this overall average would be either "A" or "A+."

"A" — It seems likely that the student has an abundance of self-initiative, curiosity, and interest in discovery. Consistent participation is important. Not perfect but nearly perfect on-time attendance. Effort aimed towards understanding the material rather than the collection of points. Consistent effort is obviously necessary although when a pattern of excellence is established, a few misses along the way will not matter. If the student has such a profile, even if the numbers might indicate an "A-" it is likely the submitted score will be an "A." If the scores are lower than that, it is not unusual for me to take a close look at all the data and determine whether the letter grade can be bumped up one step.

"A-minus" — This grade is more common than "A" in my scheme. Something in the above is lacking or missing but overall the student meets the "A" profile.

"B" grade band — These students have performed well. Their approach to the class is good. Their level of learning is good. It is likely that if these two things are in place, weaker skills scores will not lower their letter grade. These students do most of the work, make reasonable effort, and seem engaged most of the time.

"C" grade band — Effort is the key indicator for this grade level. If the student has made consistent effort and conveyed (through a combination of words and actions) this to me through class presence or their out-of-class communications in the various forms available, they will likely be in the "B" grade band. "C" students seem to be in neutral the majority of time. These students might do what is assigned but only that and are seeking ways of minimal engagement often enough that it is noticeable. (All students have times when they are overwhelmed with other class duties and are less involved in the course for brief periods of time.)

"D" grade band — Course content has core, bottom-line, material that needs to be mastered and much other content that should be learned to some degree. When core content seems clearly not to have been learned, a student is a candidate for this grade band. If the student seems entirely disengaged this, plus assessment results, can place a student here as well. I will not assess a student as a "D" student unless I have looked at all data collected and concluded that there is really no other fair grade.

7.7. The P/NP (pass/no pass) grade option

It is best to contact me if you are considering the P/NP grade option. There are many reasons:

- If you are underperforming, not only will be I worrying about you but I will wonder why you seem disengaged. If I do not know you are P/NP this impression will have an out-sized effect of your grade.

- If I know you are P/NP I can manage group assignments better and that is good for you and your fellow students.

- If you are considering P/NP we can work out a plan that works for you. My assignments are so inter-related that it is difficult to reduce the workload by just skipping assignments randomly.

- There are core assignments that must be done and if you are unaware of what they are, and skip one of those core assignments, you will receive an NP even if your grades are otherwise high in the class.

8. SCHEDULE (initial version)

8.1. Dates of major assessment (graded events, like tests)

There are one-on-one interviews at the end of the term. Otherwise students are assessed on a session-by-session, assignment-by-assignment basis. Although research papers and analytic essays are due after the second novel and again after the final novel, in terms of assessment these are equal in value to the regular engagement and assignment submission nor are they very long, so they cannot really be said to be major assessments.

8.2. Day-to-day schedule (early draft)

Session Details will be the official schedule. When it is not updated, the "backup schedule" in our Google Folder will be the official schedule.

Thursday, August 27, 2020	1	Orientation
Tuesday, September 1, 2020	2	Community building
Thursday, September 3, 2020	3	"Grotesque realism" | Lavish are the Dead (死者の奢り, 1957 – Oe is a college student)
Tuesday, September 8, 2020	4	Existentialism

Date	#	Topic
Thursday, September 10, 2020	5	Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids (MEMUSHIRI - 芽むしり小撃ち, 1958 – Oe is a college student), first third of novel
Tuesday, September 15, 2020	6	Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids (MEMUSHIRI - 芽むしり小撃ち, 1958 – Oe is a college student), middle third of novel
Wednesday, Sept 16 @ 11:59PM		undergraduate student deadline to add, drop, swap, and change class units
Thursday, September 17, 2020	7	Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids (MEMUSHIRI - 芽むしり小撃ち, 1958 – Oe is a college student), final third of novel
Tuesday, September 22, 2020	8	MEMUSHIRI discussion of Japanese passages for those able to read in Japanese, observation and analysis by others
Thursday, September 24, 2020	9	A Personal Matter (KOJIN - 個人的な体験, 1964 – shortly after the birth of Hikari), first third of novel
Tuesday, September 29, 2020	10	A Personal Matter (KOJIN - 個人的な体験, 1964 – shortly after the birth of Hikari), middle third of novel
Thursday, October 1, 2020	11	A Personal Matter (KOJIN - 個人的な体験, 1964 – shortly after the birth of Hikari), final third of novel
Tuesday, October 6, 2020	12	KOJIN discussion of Japanese passages for those able to read in Japanese, observation and analysis by others
Thursday, October 8, 2020	13	Aghwee, the Sky Monster (AGHWEE - 空の怪物アグイー, 1964 – same time as KOJIN)
Tuesday, October 13, 2020	14	Faulkner
Thursday, October 15, 2020	15	The Silent Cry (MANEN - 万延元年のフットボール, 1967 – three years after KOJIN), first quarter of the novel
Tuesday, October 20, 2020	16	The Silent Cry (MANEN - 万延元年のフットボール, 1967 – three years after KOJIN), second quarter of the novel
Thursday, October 22, 2020	17	The Silent Cry (MANEN - 万延元年のフットボール, 1967 – three years after KOJIN), third quarter of the novel
Tuesday, October 27, 2020	18	The Silent Cry (MANEN - 万延元年のフットボール, 1967 – three years after KOJIN), final quarter of the novel
Thursday, October 29, 2020	19	MANEN discussion of Japanese passages for those able to read in Japanese, observation and analysis by others
Tuesday, November 3, 2020	20	O'Connor

Thursday, November 5, 2020	21	An Echo of Heaven (JINSEI - 人生の親戚, 1989 – after various overseas lectureships), first third of novel
Tuesday, November 10, 2020	22	An Echo of Heaven (JINSEI - 人生の親戚, 1989 – after various overseas lectureships), middle third of novel
Veteran's Day		An Echo of Heaven (JINSEI - 人生の親戚, 1989 – after various overseas lectureships), final third of novel
Thursday, November 12, 2020	23	JINSEI discussion of Japanese passages for those able to read in Japanese, observation and analysis by others
Tuesday, November 17, 2020	24	Assessment or Last day depending on enrollment
Thursday, November 19, 2020	25	Assessment: Individual interviews based on submitted term essay
Tuesday, November 24, 2020	26	Assessment: Individual interviews based on submitted term essay
Thanksgiving break		
Tuesday, December 1, 2020	27	Assessment: Individual interviews based on submitted term essay
Thursday, December 3, 2020	28	Assessment: Individual interviews based on submitted term essay
	RRR 1	Assessment: Revisits - Individual interviews that followup on essay changes
	RRR 2	Assessment: Revisits - Individual interviews that followup on essay changes
		No final examination

9. COURSE MATERIALS AND THEIR LOCATION

9.1. Course bibliography

Works by Ōe:

- Lavish are the Dead (死者の奢り)

- Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids (芽むしり小撃ち)

- A Personal Matter (個人的な体験)

- Aghwee, the Sky Monster (空の怪物アグイー)

- The Silent Cry (万延元年のフットボール)

- An Echo of Heaven (人生の親戚)

Other works:

- Rabelais and His World (Mikhail Bakhtin)

- Existentialism is a Humanism (Jean-Paul Sartre)

- Short stories (William Faulkner)

- short stories (Flannery O'Connor)

- a miscellany of other secondary sources

9.2. Course materials access

Students need to purchase:

FIRST NOVEL: Get an edition of this (you can read in ANY language that has a decent translation, for example Chinese) *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* (芽むしり小撃ち) … this might be difficult to get. Start searching immediately.

SECOND NOVEL: *A Personal Matter* (個人的な体験), same rules as above. The English is available as an eBook I think

THIRD NOVEL: *The Silent Cry* (万延元年のフットボール), same rules as above. The English is available as an eBook I think

FOURTH NOVEL: *An Echo of Heaven* (人生の親戚), same rules as above. I have a low quality PDF of the English translation of this book if you need it.

All other material for this class is in digital form. It is either on bCourse or within a class Google folder.

9.3. File titles

Since I develop or update files as the class develops I use a titling system that works with that approach. The method I use tells both of us:

- A: the name of the assignment

- B: the version of the assignment

I line these up "A vB". So, for example:

> **"Syllabus v200806"**
>
> means "Syllabus," version dating August 6, 2020.

I usually do not bother to include the file type when I am typing file titles in various communications with you. If there is no version designated it means it doesn't matter what the version is.

10. ASSIGNMENTS

10.1. Understanding my assignment and file titles

Since I develop assignments as the class develops I use a titling system that works with that approach. The method I use tells both of us:

- A: the type of assignment

- B: the session day for which it is relevant

- C: where the assessment took place

- D: a tag to remind us of the content

I line these up "AB C D". So, for example:

> **"EX200627 InC Active Learning"**
>
> means "an exercise (EX) related to the class session dated June 27, 2020, in class, and which was about active learning."

InC = In class / **PreC** = Before class / **PostC** = After class

10.2. Some typical assignment types and how they are used in calculating the portfolio grade components

This is an active learning class so I ask you to work with, not just read or view, the course material. There will be things to do to prepare for a session or group meeting, things to do in a session or group meeting, and sometimes things to do after a session or group meeting related to a session or meeting.

Before class

PREP = Preparation

> Submissions that help you focus your thoughts for the session and help me confirm that you have prepared for that session. While they might receive some sort of evaluation, the key grade indicator is their timely submission paired with what I observe in class or what your peers have said about how well prepared you were.

During class

ATTEND = Attendance

This tracks attendance, measuring preparation for the session, timely arrival, attentive participation during the session (including no multitasking), and remaining until the end of the session. For those who cannot attend the sessions it means timely viewing of the session and completion of the post-session assignment. So, preparation exercises and post-class exercises are paired: you will need to do one of these but never both of these.

Attendance is used for the engagement grade and, for that grade, excused absences are not part of the calculation. However, attendance is also used for the knowledge grade and absences are absences regardless of the reason because the dialogue was missed and hearing or engaging in the course dialogue is part of the knowledge component of the course.

Q / RC / VC = Quiz, Reading Check, Viewing Check

These are used to determine if students prepared assigned material. They can also help me take a pulse of class understanding on material presented so I can make adjustments accordingly.

EX = Exercises

These explore knowledge or develop skills. They are process-oriented, not product-oriented but that they (most) are completed, and with what level of curiosity or energy counts towards the engagement and knowledge components of the portfolio grade.

After class or meeting

PEER = Peer evaluations of various sorts.

Peer evaluations are anonymous to the person being evaluated, nor is that content ever seen by the person evaluated unless I have clearly set up an assignment to do so, which is very rare.

Peer evaluations tell me about the evaluator, not the student evaluated. A grade on a PEER assignment is on the person who submitted it, not the person or persons about whom the submitter is evaluating. So, for example, let's say the Student A came unprepared for a meeting. Student B reports, however, that the student was well-prepared. That tells me either Student B was *also* not prepared so does not know what good preparation looks like, or that Student B has not spent enough attention in the meeting to notice the lack of preparation. It can also suggest what Student B's standards are. It can also suggest to me that Student B does not necessarily communicate honestly. Conversely, detailed PEER submissions confirm that the student is well engaged, a keen observer, and probably well prepared, too. Students, like all of us, range from the "never satisfied" to the "everything looks beautiful" mentalities. I read peer evaluations with that in mind and look more for evidence of attention and interest than taking evaluations as reports of "good" or "bad" content.

Peer evaluations are one of my best ways of understanding you and what course grade is most accurate. Complete them with care.

Major assessments

MT = Midterms / FINAL = Final exam / ESSAY = Essays short, medium, or long. / PROJECTS = Projects, usually term projects

Random work to be done

OTHER = Random assignments required but not used for grade calculations except to complete them. An example would be for you to tell me what time zone you are in, or submit your profile page.

And ...

Each class will have some assignment types not listed above. Some of these are developed specifically for that class, that semester, others are assignments I have used in the past. Some of these will become important to the grade; others I will later judge do not help in understanding your mastery of the material. An example would be QA (Question & Answer). I used this as a way to explore material in a recent class but it just didn't work well. They were never used in grade calculations.

10.3. Assignments for this course, general description

10.3.1. Assignment flexibility (both in types of assignments and grading them)

Below is my initial intention with regard to assignments for this course. **This often changes** as I come to understand the dynamics of a particular class, including learnings interests, learning needs, and engagement levels, and interpersonal relationships. **Be ready to adjust as necessary.**

I develop assignments that are appropriate for a particular group with a particular learning goal in mind.

These things are always true:

- I can choose not to grade an assignment or use that grade when it seems the assessment was ineffective. I can drop an assignment type when it seems not to be working well for some reason. I can add new types, too. I will always give a 24-hour notice.

- I usually grade assignments with one of these scales: "High-A" which is a typical letter grade scale with a "High-A" added to it. "Nuanced complete/incomplete" which gives students a better sense of how they did on an assignment for an assessment that doesn't need to be as specific as a letter grade scale. And the standard "Complete / Incomplete" scale. I do not say ahead of time the type of scale to be used and sometimes I retroactively change the scale.

10.3.2. General description of the major assignments in this course

> Below are the major assignments for this class, where "major" either means amount of time needed to complete it or its importance to the final grade, or both.

There are, of course, other assignments. Those that will likely be most important to the final grade are underlined. However, the engagement grade is a lead factor in the final course grade.

Abstracts. Students will provide abstracts of various reading assignments.

Research statements (two). From an extensive bibliography list that I provide, you select one article or chapter of a book and read it in full and with care then you will tell me why you selected that secondary source instead

of a few others you will also mention, write an abstract of it that tells me the basic conclusions and how the author arrived at them, the thesis of the secondary source, what you think of the thesis and what you think the class would think of the thesis. This will be shared with the class. Due anytime during the term except that #2 cannot be submitted earlier than one week after #1 is submitted.

Theme Ruminations (two). You will be randomly assigned a theme and will write about it with all readings up through the second novel in mind. This is not shared with the class.

Pre-Class Journal entries. Each entry has the reading themes and you write next to the themes you want to write next to 50 words relevant to the assigned reading. This is shared in real-time with the class since it is written onto a shared Google Doc.

Post-Class Journal entries. Each entry has the reading themes and you write next to the themes you want to write next to 50 words relevant to the discussion that happened during the class. This is shared in real-time with the class since it is written onto a shared Google Doc.

End-of-novel Journal entries. For this journal entry you look back over all the other student journal entries for a particular novel and make a summary statement as to "where the class stands" on a particular theme. This is shared in real-time with the class since it is written onto a shared Google Doc.

Video contribution for class (for time zone distant students and occasionally for those who missed class). If you were not present for a class session, you submit a one- or two-minute video that responds to something someone said in the class for that session.

Video contribution for me (for time zone distant students and occasionally for those who missed class). If you were not present for a class session, you submit a six-minute video to me (I might adjust this to a longer or shorter submission during the term)

Final interview. I will ask you various things about the class to probe your memory of details about Oe, what we discussed in class, what you thought of what we discussed in class, and specifics on written work you submitted to class.