

ANTHROPOLOGY OF JAPAN

Spring 2021

Meets: Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-3:45PM

Anthropology 357

Instructor: E. Ohnuki-Tierney

The course introduces Japanese history, society and culture from anthropological perspectives. Japan or the Japanese will NOT be treated as hermetically sealed, but will emphasize how Japanese culture and society have undergone changes in the tidal waves of transnational historical flows. While examining the collective identity and its symbolic expressions – “we, the Japanese” – this notion will be questioned by examining the heterogeneity of the population, including minorities. Other topics covered are: emperor and the imperial system; language in its social contexts; educational systems; religions; gift exchange; illness and medical systems; “nature” and environment; Japan’s militarism & World War II.

Some anime (The Princess Mononoke; Norakuro) and films (Tampopo; I Dream of Sushi) will be shown for the students to do ethnography – interpret the individuals and their behavior in their social and cultural contexts

Throughout the course, the emphasis will not be on the mere regurgitation of factual materials.

