

Japan Curriculum Project for the Psychology Courses

I found the workshop titled “Imagining Japan: Literature, Arts and Religions” to be highly informative and valuable for both my professional and personal growth. Dr. Thomas Kasulis’s presentation on Buddhist and Shinto ideas was outstanding and provided me with a historical framework to understand Japanese naturalism and nationalism in a more meaningful way. Dr. Noriko Aso’s presentation on engaging modes of education was particularly relevant to my discipline, developmental psychology. Current conceptualization of childhood, role of body movement, and children’s program on moral development were relevant to the topics I cover in the course. I intend to incorporate material and ideas provided by the various speakers into my Developmental Psychology: Childhood course to provide my students with an alternative approach to child development. I would like to thank all the organizers for organizing such a great workshop on Japan.

Buddhism and Japanese culture will be introduced in General Psychology, Psych 1100 Course in the following manner:

One general psychology learning outcome is understanding personality development. Four perspectives on personality development are discussed in the course: psychodynamic, humanistic, behavioral, and trait approach. At the core of Humanistic paradigm are the concept of self, the real self and congruence between the two that facilitates healthy development. An independent self is emphasized for optimal development. Buddhist theory of self will be introduced to differentiate between independent self, interdependent self and Buddhist self of No-I. The five ‘heaps’ that make up the Buddhist self will be introduced: matter form, sensation, perception, Samskara (habitual mental tendencies), and consciousness. The mind-body relationship will be revisited in understanding personality development. The Buddhist perspective will provide students with the opportunity to learn about the Japanese culture and its preferred patterns for relating to people and things. Thomas Kasulis’s presentation on two kinds of relating will also be pertinent here: integrity versus intimacy – arguing that latter plays particularly important role in Japanese culture and society. Students will be introduced to two kinds of knowing: esoteric knowing (intimate, engaged knowing) and exoteric knowing. Esoteric knowing that emphasizes understanding how and not what and its three karma – thought, work, and deed – will be discussed here. Forms of movement (deeds) are very important in Buddhism and are inherent in Japanese art like martial art, theatre and craftsmanship. Basically, role of Buddhism as a philosophy in shaping Japanese culture will be introduced.

“Children of Japan: Socialization through media”- a section will be included in the Psychology 2230: Developmental Psychology: Childhood Course:

Part of Noriko Aso’s lecture on education is particularly relevant to my Development Psychology : Childhood class. I plan to add a section titled “Children of Japan: Socialization through media”. The emphasis on children as the future of the nation, the whole child development (cognitive, physical, as well as socio emotional), and engaging mode of education will be incorporated under the section of socio-emotional development. Pointing the similarities between Japan’s emphases on esoteric knowing

that is learning by doing and Piaget's active learning (construction of knowledge) model of cognitive development will be insightful. In Japan, socialization through modeling is practiced at the national level. Television programs teaching moral lessons are broadcasted in Japan that targets preschoolers. Classical poems on various topics of gender equality and moral issues were used in these programs where the children and adult models would recite as they engaged in various body movement including martial arts. The characters will oscillate between black and white, adult and child, truth and false portraying life lessons, hence planting the seeds for later spiritual development.

As resources for the two above mentioned courses the followings will be added to COD library:

1. Kasulis, Thomas. Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook, University of Hawaii Press, 2011
2. Noriko Aso provided teaching resources on Childhood Studies (selected ones) will be used.

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