

Before this course, my knowledge of Japanese culture was very lacking and I only knew about things such as sushi, anime, and big technology, but not much else. The understanding of another culture is something that is very important to truly grow as a person. While studying the culture of Japan, I have gained a new appreciation for other cultures while acknowledging the differences that we have. I had never been exposed to the things that have shaped the modern world of Japan and about how Japanese society works. Now, I've gained a much better understanding of the cultural forces that influence Japan, and also how these things came to be. This course has brought me deeper into the culture of Japan and the many different aspects of it that I had never known before. There are many things that are very comparable and contrastable with the United States that I have never seen before this course and it is very interesting to see that.

There are many complex social forces in Japanese society, which are derived from the extremely rich history and traditional culture that have shaped the society of the nation. The traditional Japanese hierarchy structure is definitely something that contributes to the strong cultural values. This value derives from Confucianism which emphasizes the respect of authority and keeping social harmony and justice. This can be seen through the many different aspects of Japanese life. The concept of social harmony is what cohesively brings together the Japanese culture with the roots of this being traced back to its feudalistic roots. During this time of the samurai, absolute loyalty to your lord and community reigned above all amongst priority and from that, loyalty was brought back to you from your lord and community. This time period sets the foundation for the modern Japanese society by instilling the roots of this culture from

generation to generation. This caused the passing down of this respect for the community to the younger generations and has allowed for prosperity. Furthermore, the modernization and globalization of Japan has introduced new factors into modern Japanese life. With the rapid technological advancements and massive economic growth made, this has led to more artistic and individualistic expression amongst the newer generations of the Japanese people and caused a mass consumerism. This has led to a new shift amongst Japanese people, but still keeping a traditional society with social harmony. Overall understanding these social forces are what allow us to get deeper within the Japanese culture itself while understanding its influence from many different factors.

Japan as a country is very rich in culture and history while having amongst some of the biggest companies in the world. It has been a very interesting experience for me to study this culture and see its many similarities and differences that it shared with the U.S.A. . One aspect of Japanese culture that is very inspiring to me and interesting is the concept of “wa” which is responsible for the social harmony amongst the society. This maintains harmony when in social spaces such as the street, subway, or even out in restaurants. This is very important in Japanese culture as it is found in many different places. This relates to the way people treat each other, animals, and the nature that is around all of us. This attachment to being respectful is why I believe they are so respected in the globalized world. Another thing I respect about Japanese culture is the respect they have for their elders and how much care they take of them. This is very important because they recognize the importance of the parents and how much they have done for them. This is closely related to the tea ceremony and flower

arrangements as they are shown as respect to the traditions of the land. The art of Japan is also incredible with regards to its architecture with the older Japanese temples with the distinguishable roofs to its incredible art. This shows the blend of Ancient and modern Japanese culture and puts them together which is truly spectacular.

As someone who has only been able to explore western cultures that are from North America such as the United States and Mexico, experiencing an eastern culture such as Japan has been a very fulfilling experience that has allowed me to think in a new light. When considering the state of the United States and it's economy, it is important to think about other global factors as Japan and see how they affect us and how we affect them. There is a big difference between the economies of Japan and the United States, while in the U.S. we are considered to be very capitalistic while only focusing on ourselves and our interests, in Japan, they are more focused on group effort as a company and the total success of everyone. This has led to Japan having a very prosperous economy while maintaining good relations with everyone else in the modern world. I think the two countries are very comparable in many ways but at the same time are completely different. While both are completely on different sides of the world they are both the social hubs for their respective locations. On the other hand while the U.S. was focused on colonization and immigration, Japan has been focused on being isolated and has had a rapid modernization which led to a different perspective of modern culture. These two countries have many differences and Similarities but being able to recognize these are essential to understanding a different culture and seeing how we relate to each other in the modern world.