

## 日英文化比較 [Contrastive Studies on Japanese and Western Culture]

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### **Introduction:**

To reflect the changes in contents that have occurred over the past several academic years, the course name was changed this year from *Eiebei Jijo* "Current Affairs in the English-speaking World" to *Nichiei Bunka Hikaku* "Contrastive Studies on Japanese and Western Culture". One thing that should be noted is that the *Nichiei* in the Japanese title suggests a limitation to a comparison between Japanese and English-speaking culture, while the English title has the latter expanded to western culture. Although the textbook concentrated on North American culture, discussion was open to comparison between Japan and any other culture.

### **Course Overview:**

Irrespective of the name change, as in previous iterations, this class is open to all students in the Faculty of Education. Primarily students, usually second-term sophomores, majoring in Education for International Understanding (EIU) and EFL training take it, along with several students from other majors. For the 2012 Fall Term, 25 students registered for the course, and 24 completed it (the one student never attended from the start of the term).

The textbook was *Exploring Hidden Culture: Deeper Values and Differences between Japan and North America* written by Paul Stapleton and originally published in 2001. While the text is over 10 years old, much of the content is still valid and it is a lot more current than the textbook used prior.

Grading was based on three quizzes, participation in 11 asynchronous on-line discussions conducted through Moodle forums, six group presentations, one individual presentation, and a final report, along with in-class and Moodle feedback activities.

The content discussed in the forums and presentations came from selected chapters from the textbook and from three movies shown in the class. Students were able to freely choose subjects for their individual presentations and final reports, as long as they had something to do with cultural comparison.

### **Use of Moodle:**

The instructor has gradually been increasing the emphasis on Moodle use in an attempted to provide a truly "blended" learning environment. As a basic use of the LMS, materials either produced by the instructor or selected from sources on the Internet were disseminated to the students through Moodle resources or assignments. Students, for their part, used Moodle to submit assignments throughout the course, but its major role was to allow the students to participate in the two discussion forums; one for groups, and one for all members of the class.

### **Student-based Course Evaluation:**

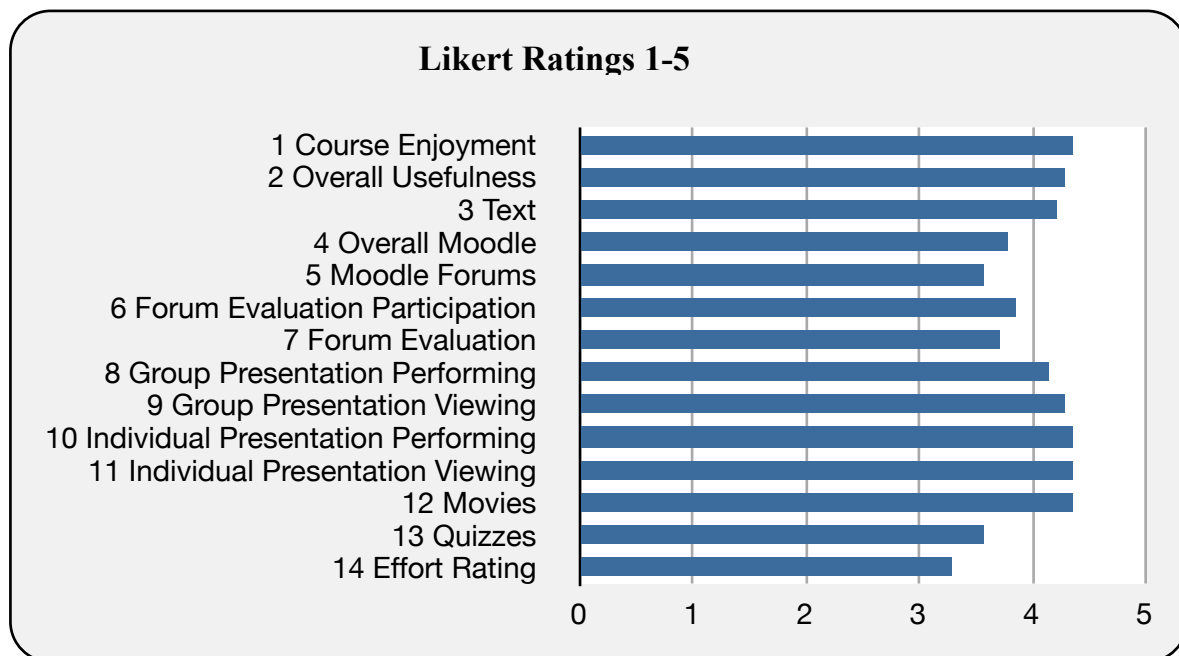
Using the Moodle questionnaire module, the students were asked to complete a relatively simple evaluation at the end of the course. The evaluation consisted of 14 items asking for ratings

of statements on a five-point Likert scale, a question in which the student is asked what grade they would expect from the course, and, finally, four open-ended items.

### Likert Scale Ratings:

The students were asked to rate various aspects of the class in 14 5-point Likert-scale questions, and, in Question 14, they were also asked to rate their own performance. The questions along with a chart showing the results are given below.

- (1)The course was enjoyable.
- (2)The course was useful.
- (3)The textbook was useful.
- (4)Using Moodle helped me in this class.
- (5)The Moodle discussion forums were useful and educational.
- (6)I participated in rating my group members.
- (7)The evaluation of forum posts was useful
- (8)Doing the group presentations was useful.
- (9)Watching the group presentations was useful.
- (10)Doing the individual presentations was useful.
- (11)Watching the individual presentations was useful.
- (12)The movies were educational and helpful.
- (13)The quizzes were helpful in learning the subject matter.
- (14)How would you rate the amount of work you put into the course?



### Self-evaluation and Open-ended Questions:

What grade would you expect to get for your performance? 0-100

What did you like or find useful about the class?

Do you have any suggestions for changes in the course?

Comments, greetings, suggestions, anything at all.

Do you have any opinions or suggestions about the group discussion forums?