

20th-Century Japanese Fiction

William E. Naff, Autumn, 1990

Japanese fiction in the twentieth century is exciting and interesting not only for the stories and the ways in which they have been told but for the perspectives that it offers on the European literary tradition, on the traditional literatures of Japan and China, the problem of *canonical* status in world literature, and on the problems of literary translation. In the course of this seminar we will explore some of these questions through works by such writers as Natsume Sōseki, Mori-gai, Shimazaki Tōson, Tanizaki Jun-ichirō, Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, and Abe Kōbō.

The seminar will center around close reading and discussion of modern novels, short stories and English-language critical literature. Alternative translations and critical studies in English and other languages will be explored as well as selections from the original Japanese text and Japanese-language scholarship.

Prerequisites: Completion of Third-year Japanese, or an ability to read effectively in some other language besides English, or instructor's permission. It is most likely that all students will not be able to read all the languages represented in the discussions but all seminar members will be expected to do some of their research in at least two languages, including English, Japanese, Chinese, French or German. Those with a background in English literature or in the latter three languages are particularly encouraged to participate even if they do not know Japanese.

Requirements: Keeping up with the assigned reading, participation in class discussion; development of a research topic; presenting the instructor with a formal, written research proposal by the end of the fifth week; an oral presentation to the class during one of the final meetings, completion of a term paper to be due during examination week.