

The 1st Social Science and Humanities Forum Japan-Russia

Native Literature and World Literature
(Родная литература и
мировая литература)

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The Univ. of Tokyo – its history

- The Univ. of Tokyo was founded in 1877 – originally consisted of 4 faculties: Letters, Law, Natural Sciences, and Medicine

The Structure of the Faculty of Letters and the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology

- Consists of the following 4 divisions:
- (1) Philosophy and Religion
- (2) History
- (3) Language and Culture
- (4) Psychology and Sociology

Division 3: Language and Culture

- Consists of 12 departments:
- Linguistics, Japanese Language, Japanese Literature, Chinese Lang. and Lit., Indian Lang. and Lit., English Lang. and Lit., German Lang. and Lit., French Lang. and Lit., Slavic Lang. and Lit., Italian Lang. and Lit., Contemporary Literary Studies, Classics (Greek and Latin)

The Curriculum

- 4 Years of Study:
- First two years: General Education (not specialized yet), including foreign languages
- Later two years: Specialized study in respective fields; stress on close reading of texts in their original languages; most students are required to write a graduation thesis

The Decline of the Discipline?

- The problems of Literary Studies today:
- (1) Decrease of Interest in and importance of literature against the background of the development of various media and genres (cinema, animation, manga, etc.) Orientation toward cultural studies rather than literature.

The Decline of the Discipline?

- (2) In particular, the decrease of interest in foreign literature and motivation for the study of foreign languages (the contemporary youths tend to be self-content with the life in Japan, and show less interest in the studies of foreign languages and in going abroad).

The Decline of the Discipline?

- (3) Decrease of the necessity to study foreign languages other than English (under the influence of English-centered globalization).
- In natural sciences, students are not encouraged to study foreign languages other than English.

The Decline of the Discipline?

- (4) Stress on “real” sciences. Each faculty is now required to seek for its funds, and the faculty of letters doesn't have a bright perspective in this activity.

In Search of a new framework

- The Existing framework of literary studies does not quite meet the diversity of world literature today and the new literary canon which is being formed now.
- Major languages and literatures (such as English, French, German, etc) are covered, but other fields (Asian, African, and Latin American) do not come in the framework.

Contemporary Literary Studies: A New Attempt

- The Department of Contemporary Literary Studies was founded in 2007, which aims at studying literature from a wider perspective, not limiting the students with the study of one foreign language and one foreign literature. Japanese literature is also viewed in this new framework.

Fields to be covered by the Contemporary Literary Studies

- Translation Studies.
- Theory of Criticism.
- Approaches to World Literature.
- Border-crossing Literature: Émigré literature, Creole literature, multilingualism and literature
- Languages and Literatures that are not covered by the existing departments (Slavic and East European, Periphery of Europe, Latin American).

Toward a Renewal of the Canon

- David Damrosch: “World literature is not a set of canonical texts, but a mode of reading.”
- The question, both moral and of literary history: how can we read world literature, far from our narrow fields of specialization.

Anthologies of World Literature

- Canon-forming function of Anthologies of World Literature (e.g., Б и б л и о т е к а в с е м и р н о й л и т е р а т у р ы , published in the Soviet Union in 1960's and 1970's in 200 volumes.
- Is a totally new project possible?