Welcome Everyone Joining the UCEAP 2016 Meigaku program,

I am Luke Roberts, a professor of Japanese history at UC Santa Barbara, who specializes in Tokugawa era Japan, and right now I am researching daily life of the samurai in the 18th century. At UCSB I teach about Japan from ancient times right up to the present.

I have lived in Japan almost 9 years of my life since 1981 when I first went right after graduating in anthropology from Oberlin College and only knew very little Japanese. Now I am now fully fluent in Japanese and have loved just about every moment I have lived in Japan. I think you all will enjoy your time there too. I was UC director at Meiji Gakuin University (called Meigaku for short) in 2012, had a great time then and think that they have great staff and their program is very well designed.

This spring you will take the UC Director's Integrative seminar with me. This course will have three goals: 1. To prepare you for the Hiroshima trip. 2. To hear lectures from visiting speakers on contemporary Japan, and 3. To have each of you do a research project that you can do only because you are in Japan. As for this latter, be thinking what you would like to research. 4 years ago students did a wide range of topics, including Harajuku fashions, Family recycling activities, Akihabara history, Japanese pop music, psychotherapy practices in Japan, Japanese welfare policies etc. etc. There are endless possibilities. The starting point is to think about what you would like to research.

You will also be choosing from courses offered by professors at Meigaku which you will learn about at orientation, and you may also choose to take another elective course that I am offering to Meigaku and UC students called History of the Present in Yokohama. It will be what is called a micro-history of Yokohama from 1850 to the present. It will be part lecture and part exploring the city of Yokohama along with Meigaku students for mini-research projects.

During your stay in Japan, you will have a field trip to Hiroshima to visit the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb and Peace Memorial, an island where the Japanese manufactured poison gas in WWII and other sites related to issues of international peace and war. You will have the opportunity hear first-hand memories from the Hiroshima survivors [hibakusha].

I also plan to lead some small field trips in the Yokohama and Tokyo area during the semester, some of which will be required and some of which will be voluntary.

Yokohama area sites of interest. Look under the Things to Do button.

A Kanagawa events calendar

A fun Japanese music video that starts in Narita Airport where you all will arrive:

I look forward to meeting you all and getting to know your interests in Japan. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me at lukerobt@history.ucsb.edu before your departure. I'll see you all on April 5.

With best wishes,

Luke S. Roberts