Japan Studies A：Cool Japan

Instructor: Gavin Brooks
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Introduction:

In 2013, the Japanese government budgeted hundreds of millions for a "Cool Japan" fund to promote Japanese pop culture abroad. Recently, Prime Minister Kishida announced plans to revive and update the program, focusing on anime and games as key industries. The new strategy aims to support young creators and artists over many years, making it easier for their work to reach international audiences. This new approach seems to be working, and in 2022, the global success of Japanese content like anime reached a record high, showing its growing popularity.

In this class, we will examine a variety of aspects of this youth culture, both in Japan and overseas, to gain a better understanding of what it is and where it came from. The topics will include music, fashion, film, manga, anime, games, and technology. To add context, we will also consider some aspects of traditional culture, including traditional Japanese crafts and theatre, both of which have experienced "booms" in recent years. Our aim will be to reach some conclusions about the cultural, societal, and political implications of this shift from traditional to popular.

Students will be expected to do individual research on areas of "Cool Japan" that interest them and present and lead discussions on the topics they choose. Students will have an opportunity to develop research, presentation, writing and discussion skills, as well as debate the merits and detriments of "Cool Japan."

Class Format:

This course is designed for students who enjoy expressing their opinions and improving their discussion and debate skills. Students will be expected to conduct individual research on a topic related to "Cool Japan", as well as make a presentation and lead discussion on the topic they have chosen. Students will be required to prepare short written assignments in order to be ready for in-class discussion. Students will be able to discuss various aspects of "Cool Japan."

Course Schedule:

Class 1: 9/28
Introduction:
Introduction to the course
Explanation of attainment objectives and grading assessment
Introduction to the idea of Cool Japan

Class02: 10/5
Cool Japan:
Where does the idea of Cool Japan come from
Is it possible to export Japan's pop culture
Linking Cool Japan to Japanese traditional culture and arts

Class 3: 10/12
Manga and Anime Class 1:
Introduction to Manga and Anime
Getting ready for the Manga Museum field trip

Class 4/5/6/7: 10/17
Taiko Drums
Manga Museum

Class 8: 10/19
Manga and Anime Class 2:
Active learning and self-study
Discussion of visit to the Manga Museum

Class 9: 10/26
Kawaii culture:
Where does the idea of Kawaii come from?
Who is Sei Shonagon?
The Wonderful World of Kawaii. How cute can things possibly get?

Class 10: 11/2
Japanese TV and Movies:
Cool Japan on TV
Cool Japan in the movies
Selling Japanese TV and Movies overseas

Class 11: 11/9
In class discussions and short presentations

Class 12: 11/16
Idols:
What is the idol phenomenon
Introducing your favourite idol
The idol industry

Class 13: 11/23
Traditional Japanese Culture:
The connection between new and old culture
Traditional culture in the modern world: music, fashion, and festivals

Class 14: 11/30
Preperation for Final Presentations

Class 15: 12/14
Final presentations

Evaluation:

Attendance: 25%

Participation and classroom performance: 20%

Homework: 10%:

Midterm presentation: 15%

Final presentation: 30%

Japan Studies B:
Representation of Nature in Japanese Culture: from ukiyo-e to anime

Instructor: I.D. Sancho
Email : ivandiazsancho@hotmail.com

Introduction:

This course explores modern and contemporary cultures in Japan from the late 19th century to today through a variety of genres and media: woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*), modern literature, painting, cinema, and animation. The main objective is to develop a narrative that shows both the historical changes and the cultural processes that constitute what we understand nowadays as Japanese Popular Culture. To do so, we will focus on how the image of nature is represented historically in a range of media.

Requirements:

Typically, each class will involve a lecture, group and class discussions, and in-class writing in response to that week's topic. Students will be expected to conduct individual research.

Evaluation:

Attendance and active participation: 30%
In-class written work: 30%
Final presentations: 40%

Course Schedule:

Class 1:	9/25 Orientation and Course Introduction. Interpreting images from Japan.
Class 2:	10/2 *Japonisme* and Impressionism: painting bridges between cultures.
Class 3:	10/9 The Perception of Nature: waves vs. clouds.
Class 4:	10/16 Musashino Plain: The Perception of nature through art history and modern literature.
Class 5:	10/23 The motif of the frog in poetry and painting.
Class 6:	10/30 Studio Ghibli Narratives. Princess Mononoke: Historical recreation and Environmentalism.
Class 7,8,9,10:	10/31-11/1 Field trip: Edo Tokyo Museum, Ukiyo-e Ota Memorial Museum of Art, and Tokyo streets. (The students will have to fill a worksheet in one of the museums.)
Class 11:	11/6 Comments on the Tokyo field trip experiences and worksheet.
Class 12:	11/13 Monsters in Nature: From Daidarabotchi to Godzilla.
Class 13:	11/27 Godzilla vs. Gojira (America and Japan): From Post-war environmental crisis to the birth of the toy industry.
Class 14:	12/4 Introduction to Media Environment. Monsters jumping from Nature to Media: Yokai and Pokémon.
Class 15:	12/11 *Final presentations*

※This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class.

Japan Studies C:
Kyoto Culture and History

Instructor: Paul Carty
Email: paulcarty@gmail.com
Phone: (TBA)

Introduction: In this class we will take a look at some of the important cultural moments in Kyoto's long history. We will discuss the religion, geography, art, literature and architecture of Kyoto. Students will be required to go and visit some of the places, which will be discussed in class.

Out textbook is "Kyoto, A cultural and literary history" by John Dougill and is required reading. Opportunities for further reading can be found on the syllabus.

Course Schedule:

9/29
Pre-Heian Kyoto, Geography, World Heritage Sites
Assignment: Read Chapter One

10/6
Emperor Kammu and Heian-Kyo
Topics: 1. Why Kyoto becomes the capital, 2. Early court poetry,
3. Yin and Yang
Further Reading
a) The Ise Stories, by Mostow,J. and Tyler, R.
b) The Ink Dark Moon, by Hirshfield, J. and Aratani, M.
Assignment: Read Chapter Two

10/13
Genji- Heian Culture
Topics: 1. Mid-Heian Poets-Sei Shonagon, Izumi Shikibu,
Murasaki Shilkibu, 2. Tale of Genji
Further Reading
a) The Tale of Genji, Seidensticker translation
b) Pillow Book, trans. by McKinney, M.
Assignment: Read Chapter Three

10/20
Buddhism, Amida
Topics: 1. Kyoto-center of the major Buddhist sects in Japan,
2. Buddhist Statues-understanding and identifying
Further Reading
a) Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions edit. Swanson and Chilson
b) The Weaving of Mantra, Abe, Ryuichi
Assignment: Read Chapter Four

10/27
Heike, Late Heian
Topics: 1. Tale of Heike- Yoshitsune and Kamakura Period
2. Literature of Late Heian- Saigyo, Kamo no Chomei, Yoshida Kenko
3. Hyakunin Isshu- One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each
Further Reading
a) Hyakunin Isshu - http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/japanese/hyakunin/index.html
b) Kamo no Chomei – An Account of Life in a Hut, http://www.washburn.edu/reference/bridge24/Hojoki.html
c) Saigyo's Poetry- http://www.temcauley.staff.shef.ac.uk/saigyo.shtml
Assignment: Read Chapter Five pp. 76-88

11/10
Zen
Focus: 1. Ashikaga Rulers
2. Zen Temples in Kyoto
Further Reading
a) Zen and Kyoto, Einarsen, J.
b) Five Mountains, Collcutt, M.
Assignment: Read Chapter Six pp 88-108

11/14 Saturday Field Trip
10:00 – 4:00 Trip to Okazaki, Nan-zenji and Philosopher's Path

11/17
Muromachi Art
Focus 1. Dry Rock Gardens
2. Zen Art
3. Noh, Kyogen
Further Reading
a) Noh – http://www.the-noh.com/

b) Japanese Stone Gardens, Mansfield, S.
c) Zen Art: Attaining Landscapes in the Mind: Nature Poetry and Painting in Gozan
Zen Author(s): Joseph D. Parker: Source: Monumenta Nipponica, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), pp.235-25
Assignment: Read Chapter Seven

11/24
Nobunaga and Hideyoshi
Topics: 1. Castles of Momoyama
2. Hideyoshi's Shrine- Toyokuni / Hoko-ji
3. Momoyama Art- Kano School
Further Reading
a) Hideyoshi, by Berry, Mary Elizabeth
b) Japonius Tyrannus, by Lamers, Jeroen
Assignment: Visit a Museum and Prepare a Presentation Poster

12/1
Tea
Focus: 1. Sen no Rikyu
2. Raku and Ceramics in Kyoto
Further Reading
a) Handmade Culture by Pitelka, Morgan
b) Japanese Arts and the Tea Ceremony by Hayashiya, Tatsusaburo, publisher: Weatherhill
c) Kyoto Ceramics by Sato, Masahiko, publisher: Weatherhill
Assignment: Read pp 143-160

12/8
Edo Period
Topics: 1. Nijo Castle, Gosho, Shugakuin Imperial Villa, Katsura Imperial Villa
2. Rimpa Art School- Koetsu, Korin Brothers
3. Literati- Haiku, Buson
Furthrer Reading
a) Palaces of Kyoto, by Tadashi Ishikawa .pub Kodansha International
b) Designing Nature, The Rinpa Aesthetic in Japanese Art, by John T. Carpenter, pub. Metropolitan Museum
c) Haiku by Basho and Buson, article: http:// www.haikupoet.com/definitions/beyond_the haiku_moment.html
Assignment: Read pp 160-172

12/15
Presentation and Meiji Period
Topics: 1. Education
2. Modern Technology – Kyoto Biwako Canal
3. Movies – Sisters of Nishijin
Further Reading
a) The Old Capital by Yasunari Kawabata
b) The Temple of the Goldon Pavilion, by Yukio Mishima
Assignment: prepare for presentation

*Classwork will consist of lecture and class discussion. Students are required to go to a museum, write a report and make a presentation about one museum.

Evaluation:
Attendance and participation 25%,
Homework 50%,
Final Paper and Presentation 25%

Required Textbook:
Kyoto / John Dougill/ Signal Books, Oxford 2006
E-book is fine as well.

2026 Japan Studies Program

Japan Studies D: *Zen and the Gardens of Kyoto*

Fall semester. Classes on Thursdays, second period (11:00 am-12:30 pm)

Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts.
Division of International Affairs.

Instructor: Ignacio ARISTIMUÑO.
Email: ignitus@msn.com

Introduction:

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the Zen culture of Kyoto as expressed through its gardens. It examines the historical development of Zen Buddhism, with particular attention to its aesthetic principles, philosophical foundations, and ethical attitudes toward daily life. The course further explores the evolution of Japanese gardens, analyzing their historical transformations and typological variations, especially those shaped by Zen thought and practice.

Special emphasis is placed on the contributions of renowned gardener-monks and on the doctrinal perspectives articulated by the different Zen schools, highlighting the ways in which religious philosophy informed spatial composition and landscape design. To enrich academic inquiry and critical discussion, the program includes dialogue with a Zen monk and guided study visits to significant temples and gardens within Kyoto. These experiential components are designed to foster rigorous debate and support the formation of research groups in preparation for the final evaluation.

Through the integrated study of Zen doctrine, meditative practice, ecology, religion, art, and principles of garden design, students are encouraged to cultivate a nuanced understanding of Japanese culture. Ultimately, the course seeks to deepen intellectual engagement while nurturing a heightened aesthetic and ethical sensitivity toward nature.

Class Format:

The course will be conducted in English and will incorporate selected Japanese terminology, all of which will be carefully explained to ensure conceptual clarity. Structured as a seminar, the class will emphasize dialogue and collaborative inquiry. Active participation is strongly encouraged, and students will be expected to introduce original perspectives that contribute meaningfully to collective discussion. Accordingly, sustained critical reading will constitute a central component of the course requirements.

Assessment will extend beyond a written examination to include ongoing interpersonal engagement and the exchange of ideas, which will serve as primary mechanisms for intellectual development and formative feedback. Although no single textbook is assigned, the instructor will provide printed instructional materials to support weekly topics. Each session will also feature

PowerPoint presentations and a documentary screening designed to contextualize and deepen understanding of the subject matter.

Beginning in the fifth week, the final ten to fifteen minutes of each class will be dedicated to the practice of *zazen* meditation, thereby integrating experiential learning into the academic framework. Students are further encouraged to visit selected temples and gardens in Kyoto as a means of enriching their understanding through direct observation. The course will culminate in an oral presentation and the submission of a final research summary, through which students will synthesize and articulate their analytical findings.

Skills to Develop:

The course aims to cultivate experiential knowledge of Zen philosophy and traditional Japanese garden art, fostering a nuanced understanding grounded in both theoretical inquiry and direct engagement. It further seeks to develop students' analytical and research capabilities, enabling them to critically examine primary and secondary sources within an academic framework.

In addition, emphasis is placed on the enhancement of self-management skills, as well as the capacity for effective self-expression and communication in scholarly contexts. Students are expected to strengthen their competence in oral presentation, demonstrating clarity, coherence, and intellectual rigor. Finally, the course promotes leadership and collaborative abilities, encouraging productive teamwork and the capacity to contribute constructively within group settings.

Evaluation procedure:

1. **Individual participative evaluation** (**30%**):
   - 10% Weekly evaluation (attendance). The course is failed with more than five absences.
   - 20% Personal contribution to the class (submission of a book review on Nov. 26th).
     (structured in: 15% Book review report + 5% oral presentation).
2. **Knowledge evaluation** (**50%**):
   - 10% Field trip on Nov. 29th (Sun.).
   - 40% Middle-term test on Nov. 26th
     (structured in: 20% multiple-choice questions + 20% critical thinking questions).
3. **Interactive and group engaged evaluation** (**20%**):
   - 20% Research abstract submission and oral presentation on Dec. 3rd
     (structured in: 15% oral presentation + 5% abstract).

Course Schedule:

Class 1: Oct. 1st (Thu.) - **Chapter 1: THE STUDY OF GARDENS**
Concepts, design ideas, and basic styles.

Class 2: Oct. 8th (Thu.) - **Chapter 2: THE HISTORY OF GARDENS**
From its origins to the modern garden.

Class 3: Oct. 15th (Thu.) - **Chapter 3: THE MAKING OF JAPANESE GARDEN**
Chinese origins and the Asuka renaissance.

Class 4: Oct. 22th (Thu.) - **Chapter 4: REINVENTING AESTHETICS**
The Classical Era: Gardens of the Nara and Heian periods.

Class 5: Oct. 29th (Thu.) - **Chapter 5: THE ZEN INFLUENCE**
The Medieval Era: Gardens of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. Zazen practice.

Class 6: Nov. 5th (Thu.) - **Chapter 6: EXTRAVAGANCE AND AUSTERITY**
The Pre-modern Era: Gardens of the Azuchi-Momoyama and Edo periods. Zazen practice.

Class 7: Nov. 12th (Thu.) - **Chapter 7: GLOBAL ATTENTION AND MODERNIZATION**
The Modern Era: Gardens from the Meiji period onwards.
Zazen practice.

Class 8: Nov. 19th (Thu.) - **Chapter 8: THE MEANING OF GARDENS**
Gardens of the Edo period. Zazen practice.

Class 9: Nov. 26th (Thu.) - **MIDDLE-TERM TEST + BOOK REVIEW**
Guidance and support for final research assignment submission.
Zazen practice.

Class 10-13: Nov. 29th (Sun.) - **Field Trip: VISITING GARDENS AND TEMPLES IN KYOTO**
Lecture by a Zen monk and Zazen practice.

Class 14: Dec. 3rd (Thu.) - **FINAL RESEARCH SUBMISSION**
Research abstract and oral presentation. Zazen practice.

Class 15: Dec. 10th (Thu.) - **CONCLUSION**
Final remarks and grade submission. Zazen practice.

References for consultation:

Dougill, John and Einarsen, John (2024). *Zen Gardens and Temples in Kyoto: A Guide to Kyoto's Most Important Sites.* Tokyo: Tuttle.

Dumoulin, Heinrich (2005). *Zen Buddhism: A History* (Vol. 1 & 2). World Wisdom.

Einarsen, John (2004). *Zen and Kyoto 一禅と京都一.* Kyoto: Uniplan.

Fujiwara, Toen (2010). *What is Zen? 禅って何だろう。*Kyoto: Tankosha.

Keane, Marc P. (1996). *Japanese Garden Design.* Tokyo: Tuttle.

Koren, Leonard (2008). *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers.* Imperfect Publishing.

Kuck, Loraine (1980). *The World of Japanese Garden: From Chinese Origins to Modern Landscape Art.* Tokyo: Weatherhill.

Slawson, David A. (1987). *Secret Teachings in the Art of Japanese Gardens: Design Principles, Aesthetics Values.* Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Suzuki, Daisetz T. (1988). *Zen and Japanese Culture.* Tokyo: Tuttle.

Takei, Jiro and Keane, Marc P. (2008). *Sakuteiki: Visions of the Japanese Garden.* Tokyo: Tuttle.

Young, David and Michiko (2005). *The Art of Japanese Garden.* Tokyo: Tuttle.

Young, David and Michiko (2019). *The Art of Japanese Architecture.* Tokyo: Tuttle.