

# 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: 9/30

**Introduction:**

Introduction to the course

Explanation of attainment objectives and grading assessment

Introduction to the idea of Cool Japan

Class02: 10/7

**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: 10/14

**Manga and Anime Class 1:**

Introduction to Manga and Anime

Getting ready for the Manga Museum field trip

Class 4/5/6: 10/18

Taiko Drums

Manga Museum

Class 7: 10/21

**Manga and Anime Class 2:**

Active learning and self-study

Discussion of visit to the Manga Museum

Class 8: 10/28

**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 9: 11/4

**Japanese TV and Movies:**

Cool Japan on TV

Cool Japan in the movies

Selling Japanese TV and Movies overseas

Class 10: 11/11

In class discussions and short presentations

Class 11: 11/18

**Idols:**

What is the idol phenomenon  
Introducing your favourite idol  
The idol industry

Class 12: 11/25

**Traditional Japanese Culture:**

The connection between new and old culture  
Traditional culture in the modern world: music, fashion, and festivals

Class 13: 12/2

**Japanese festivals:**

In class discussions  
Introduction to final presentations

Class 14: 12/9

Preparation for Final Presentations

Class 15: 12/16

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:	9/26 Orientation and Course Introduction. Interpreting images from Japan.
Class 2:	10/3 <i>Japonisme</i> and Impressionism: painting bridges between cultures.
Class 3:	10/10 The Perception of Nature: waves vs. clouds.
Class 4:	10/17 Musashino Plain: The Perception of nature through art history and modern literature.
Class 5:	10/24 The motif of the frog in poetry and painting.
Class 6:	10/31 Studio Ghibli Narratives. Princess Mononoke: Historical recreation and Environmentalism.
Class 7,8,9,10:	11/1-11/2 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:	11/7 Comments on the Tokyo field trip experiences and worksheet.
Class 12:	11/14 Monsters in Nature: From Daidarabotchi to Godzilla.
Class 13:	11/28 Godzilla vs. Gojira (America and Japan): From Post-war environmental crisis to the birth of the toy industry.
Class 14:	12/5 Introduction to Media Environment. Monsters jumping from Nature to Media: Yokai and Pokémon.
Class 15:	12/12 <i>Final presentations</i>

※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.

Our 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:**

- Class 01: 9/29  
Pre-Heian Kyoto, Geography, World Heritage Sites  
Assignment: Read Chapter One
- Class 02: 10/6  
Emperor Kammu and Heian-Kyo  
Topics: 1. Why Kyoto became 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
- Class 03: 10/13  
Genji- Heian Culture  
Topics: 1. Mid-Heian Poets-Sei Shonagon, Izumi Shikibu,  
Murasaki Shikibu, 2. Tale of Genji  
Further Reading  
a) The Tale of Genji, Seidensticker translation  
b) Pillow Book, trans. by McKinney, M.  
Assignment: Read Chapter Three

- Class 04: 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
- Class 05: 10/27  
 Heike, Late Heian  
 Topics: 1. Tale of Heike- Yoshitsune and Kamakura Period  
 2. Literature of Late Heian- Saigyō, Kamo no Chomei, Yoshida Kenkō  
 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) Saigyō's Poetry-  
<http://www.temcauley.staff.shef.ac.uk/saigyō.shtml>  
 Assignment: Read Chapter Five pp. 76-88
- Class 6: 11/3  
 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
- Class 7: 11/10  
 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

- Classes 11/15 Saturday Field Trip  
8-10: 10:00 – 4:00 Trip to Okazaki, Nan-zenji and Philosopher's Path
- Class 11: 11/17  
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
- Class 12: 11/24  
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
- Class 13: 12/1  
Edo Period  
Topics: 1. Nijo Castle, Gosho, Shugakuin Imperial Villa, Katsura Imperial Villa  
2. Rimpa Art School- Koetsu, Korin Brothers  
3. Literati- Haiku, Buson  
Further 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](http://www.haikupoet.com/definitions/beyond_the_haiku_moment.html)  
Assignment: Read pp 160-172



Class 14: 12/8  
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 Golden Pavilion, by Yukio Mishima  
Assignment: prepare for presentation

Class 15: 12/15  
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

# **Japan Studies D:**

## ***Zen and the Gardens of Kyoto***

Fall semester 2025. Class on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> period (11:00 am - 12:30 pm)

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

### **Introduction:**

This course introduces the Zen culture of Kyoto expressed through its gardens. It focuses on the history of Zen, aesthetics, thought, and attitudes for daily life. It also looks to understand the history of Japanese gardens and the different types of arrangements, especially those under Zen influence. An emphasis is placed on the contribution made by famous gardener monks and the doctrinal approaches offered by the different branches. An exchange with a Zen monk and a guided study tour to relevant temples and gardens in the city of Kyoto are planned to strengthen debates and discussions, as well as to help the formation of research groups for final evaluation. The study of Zen, the practice of meditation, and the understanding of ecology, religion, art, and garden design principles are undertaken to develop a deeper understanding of Japan and awaken in the student a more sensitive disposition towards nature.

### **Class Format:**

The class format will follow the seminar style scheme. Active participation is encouraged and students will be expected to contribute with new ideas that can lead discussion on the topic. Beside of a written test, personal interaction and exchange of opinions within the class will be the method of feedback for constructing knowledge.

There are printed materials for learning prepared by the professor. In each class, PowerPoint and video documentary are shown, and the last 10-15 minutes at the end of the class a zazen meditation session will be practiced. The students are motivated to visit specific temples and gardens in Kyoto. By the end of the course, they are expected to perform an oral presentation and submit a final research report.

### **Skills to Develop:**

Experiential knowledge on Zen and traditional Japanese garden art, analytical ability and research capability, self-management, self-expression and communication skills, competence in oral presentation, leadership and team collaboration ability.

## **Course Schedule:**

Class 1: Oct. 2 <sup>nd</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 1: THE STUDY OF GARDENS</b> Outline of the course. Basic concepts and ideas.
Class 2: Oct. 9 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 2: HISTORY OF GARDENS</b> From its origins to the English garden.
Class 3: Oct. 16 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 3: THE CHINESE GARDEN</b> Hunting parks, courtyards, and beliefs.
Class 4: Oct. 23 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 4: ORIGIN OF JAPANESE GARDEN</b> Asuka renaissance and the gardens of Nara period.
Class 5: Oct. 30 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 5: REINVENTING AESTHETICS</b> Gardens of the Heian period.
Class 6: Nov. 6 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 6: THE ZEN INFLUENCE</b> Gardens of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. Zazen practice.
Class 7: Nov. 13 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 7: AUSTERITY AND EXTRAVAGANCE</b> Gardens of the Azuchi-Momoyama period. Zazen practice.
Class 8: Nov. 20 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>Chapter 8: TRANSITION IN ISOLATION</b> Gardens of the Edo period. Zazen practice.
Class 9: Nov. 27 <sup>th</sup> (Sun.)	- <b>Chapter 9: AGAIN, WHAT IS ZEN?</b> Lecture on Zen Buddhism. Zazen practice.
Class 10-13: Nov. 30 <sup>th</sup> (Sun.)	- <b>Field Trip: VISITING TEMPLES AND GARDENS IN KYOTO</b> Lecture by a Zen monk and Zazen practice.
Class 14: Dec. 4 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>MIDDLE-TERM TEST</b> Research practice, guidance & support. Zazen practice.
Class 15: Dec. 11 <sup>th</sup> (Thu.)	- <b>PRACTICUM</b> Oral presentation and research report submission. Zazen practice.

## **Evaluation:**

### **1. Individual participative evaluation (20%):**

- 15% Weekly evaluation (attendance)
- 5% Personal contribution to the class

### **2. Knowledge evaluation (40%):**

- 10% Field trip on Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>
- 30% Middle-term test on Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>

### **3. Interactive and socially engaged evaluation (40%):**

- Research assignment on Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>
- 20% Oral presentation
- 20% Final research report submission

## **References for consultation at the University's library:**

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.

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.

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

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