

**Kyoto: A Cultural History**

Monday:4:40-6:10

Thursday: 2:55-6:10 on days with field trips.

Otherwise, if there is no field trip we will start at 4:40.

**Instructor:** Cody Poulton [mcp2156@columbia.edu](mailto:mcp2156@columbia.edu)

This course will provide an introduction to over a millennium of Kyoto's rich cultural history, from the city's foundation in 794 as Heian-kyō, the capital of Japan, to present times. Kyoto was the capital longer than any other place in Japan and, even during Tokugawa times, when the centre of Japan's administration shifted east, to present-day Tokyo, it remained a major hub for Japanese culture.

In addition to weekly class readings, field trips to important historical sites associated with our readings will be conducted on most Thursdays, making for an extended class, from 2:55 to approximately 6 pm.

**Textbooks:** Our initial guide will be John Doughill's *Kyoto: A cultural and literary history* (Oxford, UK: Signal Books, 2006), supplemented by Matthew Stavros, *Kyoto: An urban history of Japan's premodern capital* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016) and selected other texts.

Doughill's book is roughly chronological, but also thematic, with each chapter focussing on an important aspect of Kyoto's cultural life at a certain period of time. We will take a stroll from the relatively peaceful age of the Heian court, through civil war and the rise of the samurai, to the flourishing during the middle ages of many of the arts and institutions that Japan, and especially Kyoto, is famous for, such as Zen, the noh theatre, rock gardens, and the Way of Tea. Kyoto was largely destroyed in more warfare that lasted for close to a century before the unification of the country under three generations of warlords in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu. Each of these men left their stamp on the city, but Ieyasu and his dynasty of shoguns ushered in another age of peace that forged the foundations of the modern city we see today. Stavros's book, while concluding at the dawn of the Tokugawa era, provides a vivid historical and geographical account of how the city has radically changed over the centuries while still maintaining, more or less, the grid of streets and avenues running north and south, and east and west, planted down in the eighth century when the capital was first moved here.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Over the centuries, Kyoto has been home to people from all walks of life: emperors and the court nobility; samurai, both high and low, from all over the country; priests, monks, and nuns; outcasts and outsiders; merchants, artists and artisans; geisha, courtesans, and prostitutes; and, last but not least, scholars and students. Each of these groups has played an important role in Kyoto's urban geography and will be subjects for discussion.

Students will be expected to do a fair amount of walking in this course. We will link specific urban and suburban spaces to specific times in Kyoto's history through readings and

field trips to the places we have been reading about. This will enable us to get a physical sense of the city's long history and the people and events that were central to it.

For your essays and assignments, students will get to explore the city more on their own to map out specific sites associated with historical personages, events, or topics of your own choice. The intent is to experience, as much as possible, Kyoto's geography and history, and how its urban spaces have changed through time.

### **Course Policies:**

*As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.*

*In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.*

*Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated.*

### **Accommodations:**

*If you are a student with a disability and have a Disability Services-certified 'Accommodation Letter' from your home institution, please send me this letter before the first day of class to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation and do not have an accommodations letter, you should contact the Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement at Columbia University ([uge@columbia.edu](mailto:uge@columbia.edu)).*

### **Course Requirements:**

**Attendance:** Daily attendance is mandatory. NO make-up classes will be given. In the event of illness or other absence, please notify your instructor or the office staff as soon as possible by telephone or via e-mail.

**Homework:** Consists primarily of readings (approximately 100 pp. per week). Read the assigned readings by Monday of every week in order to be able to discuss them in class.

**Five Biweekly Assignments: Worth 5 X 10%= 50%.** Kyoto is full of important historical sites, whether they are temples, shrines, or simple roadside markers. Discover a place in Kyoto associated with a historical personage or event and write a short (500-750 word) review of it. These will be independent of the sites covered in our field trips.

**Essay: Worth 40% total**

Outline (due February 9): 10%

Annotated bibliography (due March 2): 10%

Final Essay (due April 13): 20%

**Final Exam** (April 18): **Worth 10%**. Will mark you on your factual knowledge of Kyoto history and geography from the 16th century to the present.

**Grading:** Letter Grades are calculated on the following Grade Point Average (GPA) scale:

A+ = 4.33	B+ = 3.33	C+ = 2.33	D = 1.00
A = 4.00	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	F = 0.00
A- = 3.67	B- = 2.67	C- = 1.67	

**A Few Tips:**

All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, on single-sided paper. Always proof-read your work before submitting it, and keep an extra copy of anything you have submitted in case the original is somehow "lost in transit."

**\* All work must be submitted on the scheduled dates.** Unless prior permission has been given, students who fail to submit their outline and essay at the time it is due will be deducted 5% from the total mark for that assignment for every day it is late. Written assignments submitted more than one week past deadline without prior approval will receive a mark of zero.

**\*\* Plagiarism and cheating are not permitted and if you are caught you will fail! Cite all your sources judiciously.**

I'll assess your written work on the basis of the following (percentages are rough benchmarks for weighting of my evaluations):

CONTENT ( /40%): Are all the points you raised relevant to your argument? Have you backed up your information with factually accurate and relevant data, with reference to primary sources and secondary criticism, and (if necessary) material covered in class lectures and readings? Have you covered all the relevant points? Are your ideas original and well thought out?

STRUCTURE ( /20%): Do you state clearly and explicitly your topic and thesis in your introduction? Is there a coherent and logical progression of your ideas, which are reviewed and summarized in your conclusion?

GRAMMAR AND STYLE ( /20%): Please note that term essays and examination papers will be refused a passing grade if they are deficient in English. You are expected to demonstrate that you can express yourself clearly, correctly, and as precisely as possible in writing. Should you fail to do so, the least you can expect is a letter-grade reduction (i.e., 'A' to 'B'). On the other hand, writing with originality and flair may boost your grade.

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION ( /10%): Have you used correct spelling and punctuation?

PHYSICAL PRESENTATION ( /10%): Is the work double-spaced, typed, and legible? Does it have a title page with your name on it? Are citations identified by page references or footnotes? Is a complete bibliography provided?

### **Research Tools:**

Many resources, such as journal articles, encyclopedias and dictionaries and even some books and videos, are available online through your university library on databases like JSTOR.

### **Style Guide:**

Please use italics for words that are not in the English lexicon. Words like *satori*, *samurai* and *Shogun* can be found in an English dictionary, but less familiar words, like *wabi*, *sabi*, and *waka*, should be in italics. Put academic articles, essays and shorter works into quotation marks (e.g. Nicolas Fiévé, “Kyoto’s Famous Places: Collective Memory and ‘Monuments’”), but longer, book-length works into italics (e.g. Matthew Stavros, *Kyoto: An urban history of Japan’s premodern capital*). Either the MLA or Chicago Style of citation is permissible. Please refer to the following link on Vassar’s website for citation styles: <https://library.vassar.edu/research/citing-sources>

## Tentative Schedule

**\*Please note: the following schedule is very tentative and is subject to change.**

**Week I: Jan 16, 19: Heian-kyō: the City of Kanmu.** The foundation of a new capital. Geomantic properties of the site; sources of water; Chinese models; features of the court aristocracy; a native literary culture. (Trip to Imperial Palace and, time permitted, Shimogamo Shrine.)

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 1. Poems from the *Kokinshū*.  
Stavros, Chapter 1. “Kyoto: The Ideal.”

**Week II JAN 23, 26: City of Genji:** Sei Shōnagon and Lady Murasaki, court literati in rival salons; Uji and other sites around Kyoto associated with Murasaki and *The Tale of Genji*. (Trip to Uji?)

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 2. Excerpts from *The Pillow Book* and *The Tale of Genji*.  
Stavros, Chapter 2. “Kyoto: The Real.”

**Week III JAN 30, FEB 2: City of Buddhism:** Nara, Heian, and Kamakura Buddhism; Saichō, Kūkai and esoteric Buddhism; Ganjin, Ippen, Kūya, Hōnen, Shinran: medieval populizers of Buddhism. (Trip to Enryakuji.)

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 3. Excerpts from specific religious texts.  
Stavros, Chapter 3 “Making Kyoto Medieval.”

**Week IV FEB 6, 9: City of Heike:** Taira Kiyomori, Minamoto Yoshitsune, Yoritomo. Trip to Matsubara bridge and Rokuhara Mitsuji.

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 4.  
Stavros, Chapter 4. “Rakuchū Rakugai: Inside/Outside, Public/Private.”  
Excerpts from *The Tale of Heike*, Kamo no Chōmei, *An Account of my Hut*, poems by Saigyō.

**Week V: FEB 13, 16: City of Zen:** Ikkyū. **Lecture by and zazen with Takafumi Kawakami, Shunkōin, Myōshinji, TBD.**

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 5.

Stavros, Chapter 5, “Warriors in the Capital: The Ashikaga and the classical ideal.”

Excerpts from Ikkyū’s anthology and other philosophical texts.

**Week VI: FEB 20: City of Noh:** Kan’ami, Zeami and the origin of a performing art. Mibu Kyōgen. (Trips to see Mibu kyōgen, Feb. 22, and a noh play, TBD.)

FEB 23:NO CLASS: Emperor’s Birthday. National Holiday.

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 6. Text of noh play we go to see.

**Week VII FEB 27, MAR 2: City at War:** Ōnin no ran. Trip to Ginkakuji March 2.

**Readings:** Stavros, Chapter 6, “Warring States Kyoto: Erasing the Capital City.”

**Week VIII MAR 6, 9: City of Unification:** Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the rebuilding of Kyoto. Visit to Nijō Castle March 9.

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 7.

Stavros, Chapter 7, “Castle Town Kyoto.”

**Week IX MAR 13, 16: City of Tea.** Visit to tea ceremony and an appropriate tea room. Daitokuji?

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 8, Okakura Tenshin, *The Book of Tea*.

**Week X MAR 20, 23: City of the Tokugawas.**

MAR 20: NO CLASS.

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 9. Excerpts from Basho and Buson. Visit to Shūgakuin. Stavros, “Epilogue: Bridge to the Modern.”

Nicolas Fiévé, “Kyoto’s Famous Places: Collective Memory and ‘Monuments’ in the Tokugawa Period.” In Nicolas Fiévé and Paul Whaley, eds. *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective*. Routledge Curzon, 2003.

**Week XI MAR 27, 30: City of Bakumatsu:** Field trip to sites around town associated with Sakamoto Ryōma, the Shinsengumi and the Boshin War.

**Readings:** TBA

**Week XII APRIL 3, 6: City of the Pleasure Quarters:** Visit to Shimabara and Sumiya April 6. Recommended: strolls through Gion, Miyagawa-chō, and Gojō Rakuen.

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 10, TBA.

Nicolas Fiévé, “Social Discrimination and Architectural Freedom in the Pleasure District of Kyoto in Early Modern Japan.” In Fiévé and Whaley.

**Week XIII APRIL 10, 13: A Modern City.** Visit to the Museum of Kyoto? Heian Shrine and Okazaki? **Lecture by Kinoshita Ryōichi April 10**, TBD.

**Readings:** Doughill, chapter 11.

Takagi Hiroshi, “The Emperor System and Kyoto: Images of the Ancient Capital.” Chapter 1 in Breen, Maruyama, Takagi, eds. *Kyoto’s Renaissance: Ancient Capital for Modern Japan*. Renaissance Books, 2020.

John Breen, “Performing History: Festivals and Pageants in the Marking of Modern Kyoto.” Chapter 2 of Breen, Maruyama, Takagi (2020).

Yamasaki Masafumi, with Paul Whaley. “Kyoto and the Preservation of Urban Landscapes.” In Fiévé and Whaley.

Kinoshita Ryōichi. “Preservation and Revitalization of *machiya* in Kyoto.” In Fiévé and Whaley.