

Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies

Course Syllabus – Spring 2026

Japanese Literature as World Literature

(in advanced-level Japanese)

世界文学としての日本文学（上級日本語）

Instructor: Shigemi Nakagawa

### **Course Description**

Japanese literature has a history of over 1,000 years. Despite the fact that Japanese is one of the less spoken languages in the world, Japanese literature has made a global impact, probably because of its long history and an interest in its special cultural background.

In this course, we will consider various methods for rethinking Japanese literature as world literature, while at the same time exploring how Japanese literature has been generated in the modern era.

Specifically, we will read literature, Japanese short stories, from the Meiji period to the present, while considering how "Japanese modern literature" developed in the cultural context of modern Japan. At the same time, we will attempt to read literature centered on discussion, referring to visual works and other materials, while taking up a wide range of issues shared by the world, such as imperialism, colonialism, Marxism, and gender, in a contemporaneous manner.

This class will consist of lectures, discussions, and presentations. In lieu of a final exam, students will give a presentation on the research topic of their choice and write a final paper based on their own research and analysis.

Students are expected to compile by the beginning of the class a short essay on Japanese literature, Japanese films, animation, manga, etc. that they have been exposed to. From there, we will begin to consider the global simultaneity of Japanese literature and culture. It is hoped that this will be a fruitful learning experience in the Japanese language and literature for the students.

Occasionally it may be useful for us to refer to translations of the original to analyze stylistic aspects of the work or discuss strategies for interpreting and translating a literary work, but as much as possible, the texts to be read in class as well as the language of instruction and discussion of our readings will be in Japanese. Students will therefore be expected to be at advanced (third or fourth year) level Japanese to take this class.

**Evaluation:**

Weekly assignments: (10 X 3%) 30%

Presentation and Final Essay assignment:30%

Class presentation: 15%

Final essay (due April 22) 20%

Participation and Progress: 10%

Percentage grades will be assigned to all work submitted.

**Attendance**

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

**Academic Integrity:**

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)).

### **WEEK I**

January 13: Introduction to course and its methods: What is Japanese Modern literature?  
Short introduction of Japanese Literature History.

Readings: Mitsuyoshi Numano, "Toward a New Age of World Literature"

[file:///C:/Users/imagi/Downloads/reny001012%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/imagi/Downloads/reny001012%20(1).pdf)

January 15: Introduction to Japanese literary history. From *Kojiki* to Murakami Haruki.

Reading: A History of Japanese Literature:

<https://www.britannica.com/art/Japanese-literature>

### **WEEK II**

January 20: *The Tale of Genji* and translation. The possibility of mutual compatibility.

Reading: Doris G Bagen, Michael Emmerich, *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature*.

Reference: *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature*. Michael Emmerich. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

January 22: Film and Drama of *Genji Monogatari*

### WEEK III

January 27: Reading: World literature vs Japanese literature? How to consider the conception of literature.

Readings: Hirabayashi Taiko “Blind Chinese soldiers” 「盲中国兵」

Reference: Shigemi Nakagawa, *Reading War* 「戦争をよむ」 岩波新書 2017

January 29: Reading: Hara Tamiki 「夏の花」

[https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000293/files/4680\\_18529.html](https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000293/files/4680_18529.html)

Reference: John Treat, *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, University of Chicago Press; 2nd (1996/6/1)

### WEEK IV

February 3: Reading : Reading Japanese literature 5: Akutagawa Ryunosuke: 「藪の中」

[https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000879/files/24454\\_47036.html](https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000879/files/24454_47036.html)

February 5: Literature and Cinema :

Film: Kurosawa Akira, “Rashomon” 「羅生門」

### WEEK V

February 10: Discussion How consider the difference between literature and cinema

Reading: Nigel Andrews, “How Akira Kurosawa conquered the west — and gave back”

<https://www.ft.com/content/29b63a0f-3c30-4de9-9456-fa48118978ff>

February 12: Kyoto and Literature

Reading: Kajii Motojiro, “Lemon” 「檸檬」

[https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000074/files/424\\_19826.html](https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000074/files/424_19826.html)

### WEEK VI

February 17: Modernism and Literature

Lecture: Shigemi Nakagawa, 「モダニティの想像力 文学と視覚性」

February 19: Reading: Anzai Fuyue, 「蝶」 and discussion

## **WEEKVII**

February 24: Reading :Yokomitsu Riichi 「頭ならび腹」

[https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000168/files/2158\\_23275.html](https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000168/files/2158_23275.html)

February26: Excursion to Kyoto Royal palace

## **WEEKVIII**

March 2 - 7 Spring break

## **WEEKIX**

March10: Reading : Hayama Yoshiki 「セメント樽の中の手紙」

[https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000031/files/228\\_21664.html](https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000031/files/228_21664.html)

Reference: George Sipos, “Tenko: Cultures of Political Conversion in Transwar Japan”

March12: Lecture, Proletarian Literature in Japanese Literature in 1920’s

## **WEEKX**

March 17 : Reading: Tanizaki Junichiro, “The Makioka sisters”

March19:Film: Ichikawa Kon, 「細雪」

## **WEEKXI**

March 24 : Film and lecture: Tanizaki Junichiro between Japanese Literature and World literature

March 26 : Excursion to Heian jingu and Cherry blossom

## **WEEKXII**

March 31 April2: Student Presentations

## **WEEKXIII**

Aplil7,9: Student Presentations

## **WEEKXIV**

April14: Student Presentations

April16: General discussion

## **Reference Books for Further Study**

David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* Princeton Univ. Press 2003

Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone*, Princeton Univ. Press 2006

Franco Moretti, *Distance Reading*, Verso 2013

Alexander Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, Verso 2015

Pheng Cheah, *What is a World?* Duke Univ. Press 2016