

Kyoto: Space, Place, and Landscape

Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies, Winter 2027

Instructor: Drew Richardson (dkr2133@columbia.edu)

Time and Location: Mondays & Fridays 1:10-2:40pm

Objectives

This course is a study of the city of Kyoto from its founding to the present day. Our study includes an urban history of Kyoto that explores the development of local culture, urbanization, and the built environment. We will also be attentive to the meanings of Kyoto, its political significance in broader Japanese history, and how it is represented in the cultural imaginaries of tourists and locals.

Moreover, this study of Kyoto will be a laboratory for the exploration of different theoretical frameworks and methodologies. We will read and discuss theorizations of space, place, and landscape from across the humanities and apply it to our experience of Kyoto. Moreover, students will be challenged to develop practical skills in observation, cartographical analysis, and GIS software.

Students will also have the opportunity to participate as citizen scientists by conducting field work for *Drawing from the Crowd: A Citizen Science Platform for Mapping Ukiyo-e Cultural Geography*. In addition to hands-on experience in a digital Japan Studies project, this assignment gives students the opportunity to become deeply familiar with the landscapes -- and especially the mountains -- around Kyoto, their depictions by artists, and the meanings they accumulated throughout history.

Learning Outcomes

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Developing observational skills
- Reading challenging theoretical texts
- Building cartographical literacy for contemporary and historical maps
- Practicing with Geographic Information System (GIS) Software
- Collaborating with citizen science research projects

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

- Knowledge of main themes, events, and persona of Japanese history with a focus on Kyoto
- A survey of theoretical conceptions of place and space
- Introduction to the field of urban history, urbanization, and the built environment
- Exploration of the representation of landscapes in visual art
- Exposure to the intersection of Japan Studies and the digital humanities

Class Materials

All texts are available as .pdfs on the course website.

Field Trips

This course includes at least five field trips to historical sites in the Kyoto area; participation in these trips is mandatory. Fieldtrips will primarily be scheduled during class time on Friday but will also take place on Saturday January 23rd and Saturday February 13th. Full details will be announced at a later date (and may include additional excursions.) Details and location of these trips are subject to change.

Note: Be prepared to walk! Because this course is interested in the exploration and navigation of space, many of the field trips for this course are not strictly locations but walks throughout Kyoto.

Following the conclusion of each field trip, students are required to reflect on their experiences in the context of that week's theoretical readings.

- 1.) Kyoto Sensory Walk (Saturday, January 23rd)
- 2.) Sacred Sites of Kyoto (Saturday, February 13th)
- 3.) To be Announced -- (Friday, February 26th)

Depending on special exhibition schedules, this will likely be The Museum of Kyoto, the Kyoto National Museum, or the Kyoto City Kyocera Museum of Art.

- 4.) GIS Fieldwork in Arashiyama or Mt. Hiei (Friday, March 19th)
- 5.) Kyoto Anime Pilgrimage Sites Walk (Friday, April 9th)

Evaluation

Travel Journal Reading Reflections	40%
Kyoto Travel Itinerary Project	15%
Kyoto Ukiyo-e GIS Mapping Project	25%
Final Exam	20%

Travel Journal Reading Reflections (40%)

At the end of each week (excluding week 1 and week 14), students will submit a short reading reflection between 500 and 750 words, where they will discuss the past week's field trips and travel experience in Kyoto in light of the readings assigned for that week. Rather than a summary of readings, this is intended to be a meditative reflection connecting the course's content to the experience of Kyoto on foot. Students are encouraged to include relevant photographs within their reflections. Crucially, it is important to engage meaningfully with the assigned readings.

In total, students will complete twelve Travel Journal Reading Reflections which will account for 40% of their final grade.

Kyoto Travel Itinerary Project (15%)

This short project is an opportunity for students to pursue their own research agenda in this course by designing a single day itinerary to explore one, highly specific element of Kyoto's urban history. Students may choose any topic they wish. (For example, the sites of famous woodblock prints by a particular artist; locations of infamous hauntings from Kyoto literature; or a tour of monuments to the Genpei war.)

A completed project will include a travel narrative of approximately 1000 words, a schedule of travel between sites, and an explanation of the relevance of each site and why they were chosen. Students are encouraged to think about not merely the sites themselves but the travel between them and how their proposed itinerary would cultivate an experience of the city. Full assignment details will be provided in class.

Due Monday, March 8th.

Kyoto Ukiyo-e GIS Mapping Project (25%)

This capstone project for the class aims to have students develop competency with GIS software to explore the extent to which the Kyoto landscape was "imagined" by artists through centuries of artistic tradition.

Information about the platform and GIS tools is available at <https://landscapes.theprintlab.org/>

Work for this project includes selecting an ukiyo-e print, visiting and photographing the site, triangulating the location of the artist with GIS software, and writing a short paper discussing the results. Full details of the assignment will be provided in class.

Due Monday April 12th.

Final Exam (20%)

The final exam is comprehensive and based exclusively on the readings for this course. The final exam consists of short-answer and long-answer questions. There is no essay component. Students are not evaluated on their writing in exam questions. This is an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the class.

Lecture Schedule & Readings

Week 1: Introduction to the Class

Friday, January 15

Week 2: Theorizing Space and Place

Monday, January 18
Friday, January 22

Week 3: Localizing Space and Place Theory

Note: Regular classes for this week are replaced by field trips on Saturday, January 23rd and Saturday, February 13th.

Saturday January 23 – FIELD TRIP #1 Kyoto Sensory Walk
Monday, January 25 – No Class
Friday, January 29 – No Class

Week 4: Urban History, Part One: From Heian-kyo to Kyoto

Monday, February 1
Friday, February 5

Week 5: Feng Shui, Fudoki, and Sacred Space

Monday, February 8
Friday, February 12
Saturday, February 13 – FIELD TRIP #2 (Sacred Sites of Kyoto)

Week 6: Urban History, Part Two: Early Modern Kyoto

Monday, February 15
Friday, February 19

Week 7: Kyoto in Cartographic History

Monday, February 22
Friday, February 26
FIELD TRIP #3 (To be Announced)

Week 8: Spring Break

March 1st to 7th (No Classes)

Week 9: Theorizing Landscape

Monday, March 8
Friday, March 12

Kyoto Travel Itinerary Project Due

Guest Lecturer: Stephanie Santschi on *Drawing from the Crowd: A Citizen Science Platform for Mapping Japan's Cultural Geography*.

Week 10: Representing Kyoto in Ukiyo-e: GIS Mapping of Woodblock Prints

Monday, March 15
Friday, March 19
FIELD TRIP #4 (GIS Fieldwork in Arashiyama or Mt. Hiei)

Week 11: Urban History, Part Three: Modern Kyoto

Monday, March 22 (Vernal Equinox Day – No Class)
Friday, March 26

Week 12: The Idea of Kyoto, Part One: Global Tourism and Soft Power

Monday, March 29

Friday, April 2

Week 13: The Idea of Kyoto, Part Two: Domestic Tourism and Japanese Popular Culture

Monday, April 5

Friday, April 9

FIELD TRIP #5 (Anime Pilgrimage Sites Walk)

Week 14: Last Day of Class – Discussion and Review

Monday, April 12

Kyoto Ukiyo-e GIS Mapping Project Due**Final Exam Period:**April 20th and 21st.**Late Work Policy**

Extensions may be granted based on individual circumstances and upon request; please reach out to me as soon as possible if you are encountering any problems. Late work without timely consultation will not be accepted.

Percentage/Letter Grade Evaluation:

Letter grades are assigned based on the following conversion table.

A+ = 95-100%	B+ = 80-84%	C+ = 65-69%	F = less than 50%
A = 90-94%	B = 75-79%	C = 60-64%	
A- = 85-89%	B- = 70-74%	D = 50-59%	

Content Advisory

This course examines some texts, images, and videos that contain descriptions of violence and/or sexual violence. I will do my best to provide individual warnings in class for course materials and in presentation slides for class content that are particularly sensitive. My hope is that these notifications will help your engagement by allowing you to prepare to work through challenging material.

They are not intended to censure content nor invite students to avoid material that challenges them. On the contrary, warning students of challenging material can help their engagement by giving them the ability to take charge of their own health and learning.

I encourage you to do what you need to care for yourself. If taking care of yourself means that you need to step outside during class, either for a short time or for the rest of the class,

you may do so without academic penalty. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

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, all work submitted in this course, whether in draft or final form, must be your own. 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.

Use of Generative AI

Absent a clear statement from a course instructor granting permission, the use of Generative AI tools to complete an assignment or exam is prohibited. The unauthorized use of AI shall be treated similarly to unauthorized assistance and/or plagiarism page 11 of Standards and Discipline at <https://universitypolicies.columbia.edu/content/standards-and-discipline>.

Policy

KCJS expects all KCJS community members to follow these guidelines when using Generative AI tools for teaching and learning, research, and work-related functions.

- Do not input confidential information;
- Do not input personal information;
- Do not input information that violates IP or general contract terms and conditions;
- Confirm the accuracy of the output provided by Generative AI tools;
- Check the output of Generative AI tools for bias;
- Disclose the use of Generative AI tools;
- Comply with third-party intellectual property rights.

For more detailed information, please refer to the following page.

<https://provost.columbia.edu/content/office-senior-vice-provost/ai-policy>

Any cases of plagiarism or cheating will be reported to Columbia Undergraduate Global Engagement and the academic advisor at your home institution and are subject to the code of

academic conduct there. In such cases, your final grade will be determined by your home institution and not by KCJS.

Students with a Disability:

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).