

Critical Reading of Japanese Culture and Arts

Last Updated: Thu, 07/31/2025

Course prefix: JAPN

Course number: 4165/8803

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
91462

Instructor First Name: Kyoko

Instructor Last Name: Masuda

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

The goals of this course are three-fold: (1) to deepen understanding of Japanese culture, especially food culture (e.g., sushi, ocha) and traditional arts (e.g., *rakugo*, a traditional comic storytelling performance, and *kabuki*, classical Japanese dance-drama); (2) to develop critical reading and writing skills (e.g., recognizing the author's purpose, tone, persuasive strategies, and language choices), along with oral performance skills; (3) to acquire intensive reading skills through *tadoku* library and a short novel (*Saga no gabai baachan*). While the overall language goal will be adjusted according to an **assessment test** conducted in August, students will work toward improving their reading and performance skills to reach approximately JLPT N3 to N2 proficiency levels.

Course learning outcomes:

1. Cultural and Artistic Knowledge

- Develop a deeper understanding of Japanese traditional and contemporary culture through the study of food culture (e.g., sushi, ocha) and traditional performing arts such as *rakugo* (comic storytelling) and *kabuki* (classical dance-drama).
- Learn the historical, aesthetic, and social contexts of these cultural forms and how they reflect broader values and ideologies in Japanese society.
- Explore the cultural significance of rituals, performance styles, and artistic conventions in shaping Japanese identity and everyday life.
- Engage in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) to learn how young Japanese people perceive traditional cultural practices today.

2. Critical Reading and Writing Skills

- Acquire tools to read and analyze Japanese texts critically, with attention to the author's purpose, tone, use of persuasive strategies, and stylistic choices.
- Identify and evaluate content selection, rhetorical framing, and language use in various genres (e.g., essays, articles, scripts, and fiction).
- Develop coherent written responses and analytical essays in Japanese that demonstrate an understanding of both content and form.

3. Extensive and Intensive Reading Development

- Build confidence in reading Japanese through **extensive reading** (読書 *tadoku*) of a variety of texts, including stories, folk tales, and essays focusing on enjoyment and global comprehension.
- Develop reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and the habit of reading for pleasure in Japanese.
- Strengthen skills in **intensive reading** through close analysis of a short novel such as 薩摩芋屋敷 (Saga no gabai baachan), extracting key themes, narrative structures, and cultural references.

4. Oral Communication and Performance

- Practice oral presentation skills in Japanese through the performance of selected scenes from *rakugo* and *kabuki*.
- Improve pronunciation, intonation, and expressiveness appropriate for public or artistic performance.
- Gain confidence in communicating cultural knowledge and personal insights in both formal and informal spoken Japanese.

5. Linguistic and Stylistic Awareness

- Raise awareness of Japanese mimetic expressions (擬音語), exploring their sound symbolism, meanings, and cultural nuances across spoken and written genres.
- Learn how mimetics contribute to expressiveness in Japanese and develop the ability to interpret and use them appropriately in context.

6. Reflective and Comparative Thinking

- Reflect on the relationship between language, culture, and identity by comparing Japanese practices with those from the students' own cultures.
- Develop intercultural awareness and sensitivity through class discussions, written reflections, and COIL-based collaboration.
- Strengthen independent thinking by formulating original interpretations of cultural materials and texts.

Required course materials:

All materials are available on Canvas.

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Diving into Japanese culture and society through Food

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New & Old (Elementary and intermediate Japanese through pop culture)

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among others.

Grading policy:

Weekly Homework [Worksheet, Kobun, Kanji Portfolio]: 15% of final grade

Essay Homework: 10% of final grade

Exam 1: 15% of final grade

Exam 2: 15% of final grade

Quizzes: 10% of final grade

Final Project Presentation on Japanese Culture: 10% of final grade

Tadoku reading log: 5% of final grade

Class Participation: 20% of final grade

**** 1% extra credit** will be awarded to **all students** if at least **90% of the class** completes the CIOS evaluations at the end of the course. **Please do not tell me whether you completed it—your response must remain confidential.** ****0.5% extra credit** will be given if you **participate in a Japanese program event**. I will announce which event qualifies at the beginning of class. ****0.5% extra credit** will be given if you participate in Japanese tea class and write a short reflection in 1 page. I will announce the details at the beginning of class. ****Grade distribution is the same for both JPN 4165/8803 students.**
Notes: Quizzes and tests primarily cover the lessons presented after the prior quizzes and tests, but they may also include some grammatical structures and vocabulary learned cumulatively up to the lesson. The final exam is completely cumulative.

Homework Policy: Students are required to submit completed homework by the assigned due dates. Homework questions will be uploaded to Canvas. **No late work will be accepted.** Assigned work should **not** be submitted via email unless prior arrangements are made. Graded homework will be returned either in class or during the following class session. If a student is unable to attend class on the due date, it is **their responsibility** to ensure the instructor receives the homework **before** the deadline.

Exams: There will be **two exams** designed to assess students' comprehension of readings, lectures, and problem sets. Each exam is worth **15 points**

Final Project Presentation on Japanese Culture: Introduce a topic related to **Japanese culture that you are interested in.**

- Explain **in your own words** why your chosen topic is appropriate for a presentation in the course "*Critically Exploring Japanese Culture and Traditional Performing Arts.*"
- You **must prepare** materials that will help your classmates understand your presentation, such as a **vocabulary list** or **handouts**.
- **Presentation time:** 6 minutes per person, followed by 2 minutes for questions.
- **Worth 5% of your overall grade:**
 - Content of the presentation (clarity, grammatical and lexical accuracy, interest level): **2.5 points**
 - Delivery (voice volume, eye contact, timing, etc.): **1.5 points**
 - Preparation (vocabulary list, PowerPoint slides, handouts, etc.): **1 point**
- **Draft (topic and outline) due:** three weeks prior to the presentation date.
- If you would like me to check your handouts or other materials
- **Presentation day:** final exam date.
- **Past examples:** "Japanese Weddings," "Obon," "Kabuki," "Tea Ceremony," "Bento Culture," "Cherry Blossom Viewing," "Koto and Shamisen," "Baseball"

Language and length of presentation:

- Students in **JAPN 4165** may present in either Japanese for 10 min
- Students in **JAPN 8830** must present **in Japanese and 20 min**, and demonstrate greater depth of analysis appropriate for graduate-level work.

Attendance policy:

Attendance and Class Performance

Students are expected to come to class fully prepared and actively participate in all activities (e.g., pair work, leading discussions). Failure to do so will negatively affect the class performance grade. Students are allowed up to **two unexcused absences** without penalty. You will get zero (0) points for any class session you miss starting at the 3rd absence regardless of the reasons. You are expect to come to class on time.

Class performance grades will be assessed according to the following scale:

3 – Student is well prepared and fully engaged, **2** – Student is not fully prepared or not fully participating, **1** – Student is inattentive or distracted, **0** – Student is absent.

You are expect to come to class on time. Arriving more than 20 minutes late or leaving more than 20 minutes early will be counted as one absence.

At the same time, Georgia Tech's official rules and regulations will be observed (see: <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4>), including excused absences for official university activities, religious observances, funerals, jury duty, and other documented events. If you are missing class for Institute excuse reasons (e.g. athletics and academic competitions), please fill out an official form, and submit it to me AND the Registrar's Office. The instructor will be notified by email if the absence is approved. Request should be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the event.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

One serious kind of academic misconduct is plagiarism, which occurs when a writer, speaker, or designer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, images, or other original material or code without fully acknowledging its source by quotation marks as appropriate, in footnotes or endnotes, in works cited, and in other ways as appropriate (modified from WPA Statement on "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism"). If you engage in plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, you will fail the assignment in which you have engaged in academic misconduct and be referred to the Office of Student Integrity, as required by Georgia Tech policy. We strongly urge you to be familiar with these Georgia Tech sites: Honor Challenge — <https://osi.gatech.edu/students/honor-code> Office of Student Integrity — <http://www.osi.gatech.edu/index.php/>