

ML 2500 OL1 - Think Globally, Act Locally: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Studies - Travel Japanese and World Cultural Heritage Sites in Japan for Engineers and Architects

Fall 2026

3 credits

Course Description:

ML 2500 – Think Globally, Act Locally: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Studies - Travel Japanese and World Cultural Heritage Sites in Japan for Engineers and Architects aims to develop an appreciation of Japanese history, art, culture, philosophy, and language through World Cultural Heritage (UNESCO) in Japan, and offers basic Japanese language skills essential for travelers. By exploring Eastern history, art, technology, sustainability, and global peace, students will gain valuable insights and develop balanced, diverse perspectives that encourage creativity and innovation in engineering and science, while fostering intercultural sensitivity to address global challenges. The course is designed to be enrolled for complete beginners in Japanese. If you have previously studied Japanese or lived in a Japanese-speaking environment, you are not allowed to take this course. Please consult with the instructor if you are not sure about your eligibility to take this course.

General Information:

ML 2500, Think Globally, Act Locally: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Studies - Travel Japanese and World Cultural Heritage Sites in Japan for Engineers and Architects, contributes to students' education in the humanities by analyzing Japanese World Cultural Heritage sites through historical, aesthetic, and cultural lenses. Students gain insights into traditional craftsmanship, sustainable design, and practical travel skills, including acquisition of basic Japanese language skills. The interdisciplinary approach fosters intercultural and linguistic awareness and equips students with knowledge applicable to their professional fields.

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course student will be able to:

1. Develop the ability to critically reflect on one's own cultural identity while recognizing, and valuing the cultural differences of others. Students will build intercultural competence through comparative analysis of global traditions, using the lens of Japanese World Cultural Heritage sites recognized by UNESCO.
2. Understand how historical events and geopolitical contexts shape cultural heritage and global perspectives.
3. Analyze cultural artifacts and heritage sites through historical, aesthetic and Eastern philosophical frameworks.
4. Gain knowledge of traditional Japanese techniques in architecture, engineering, and craftsmanship, with attention to the historical, cultural and functional significance.
5. Cultivate an understanding of traditional Japanese sustainability practices and learn how these alternative methods can inspire innovative, well-balanced approaches to problem-solving in contemporary professional contexts.
6. Examine how global challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and tourism affect heritage sites, and explore how professional skills can support their sustainable protection for future generations.

7. Engage in meaningful academic dialogue with peers and instructors, drawing insights from course readings, films, guest lectures, and project-based learning to deepen their understanding and critical thinking.
8. Develop practical communication skills for traveling, including basic Japanese linguistic proficiency, cultural etiquette, and the ability to navigate Japan's geography and transportation systems.

Evaluation Criteria

Participation	16%
Speaking Test on Lesson content and Movie Reflections (4)	36%
Guest speaker reflections (2)	12%
Act-out! assignments (4)	12%
Collaborative and/or Individual video projects (2)	24%

Description of Graded Components

Participation:

Attendance is required. Your participation in class activities and discussions is important for your learning. You are expected to ask questions during class, engage in group work, and do your homework.

You are required to:

1. Prepare the class contents before you come to class
2. Attend every class meeting and actively participate in all class activities
3. Review the materials you learned in each class meeting and engage in additional learning activities outside classroom
4. Complete all required assignments and submit them on time

Student performance will be rated on a 10-point scale based on the degrees of your active and collaborative participation and preparedness.

- **Active:** It is not enough to simply follow the instructor's direction and do classroom activities. You must regularly volunteer to share your ideas and thoughts when the instructor asks for questions.
- **Collaborative participation:** You must show cordial and cooperative attitude to maximize our limited time and maintain friendly relationship.
- **Preparedness:** You have read the materials in advance and for the language learning, you must practice new sentence structures and vocabulary before coming to class.
- **Additional considerations:**
 - **Punctuality:** If you come to a class more than five minutes late, your grade may be reduced by 20% or more.
 - **Active and timely participation:** If you are not paying attention during the class, your participation grade will be lowered.
 - If you indicate your inattention or non-participation during classes (e.g. unresponsive, taking too much time to answer when your name is called, working on something irrelevant to the course material, etc.), you will receive a score of 6 or below. What score you receive depends on the severity of the problematic behavior.

Speaking Test on Lesson content and Movie Reflections:

Your understanding of the cultural heritage sites covered in class through lectures, readings, assignments, and other materials will be assessed via an online quiz. The quiz will evaluate your grasp of the historical and cultural significance of the sites discussed, including general facts about their heritage.

Act-out Assignments:

You will be paired to perform a brief dialogue in Japanese with your classmates and the instructor. In order to receive full credits, you are required to internalize the material, demonstrating through fluent and accurate language use without reliance on written prompts during the performance. To prepare, students are expected to review relevant grammar, vocabulary, and dialogue materials introduced in the lessons. You are not allowed to "read" or "look at" the written dialogue during the performance. If you do, your grade will be substantially lowered.

Video Projects:

You will create an engaging video presentations on a cultural heritage. The goal is to create an informative and unique video that showcases the chosen property's cultural and historical significance and how it connects to the present and the future creations.

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Course Materials

Course Text: *John Dougill (2019). Japan's World Heritage Sites: Unique Culture, Unique Nature, Tuttle Publishing.* Information on how to access the textbook is available on our Canvas site.

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

Supplementary course materials will be hosted in Canvas.

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards.

For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on an assignment, project or exam will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

If we find any instance of academic misconduct and/or violation of GT Honor Code, we will take a strong action including but not limited to the following:

1. If it occurs during an exam/test/quiz, the student's exam/test/quiz will be terminated immediately even if it is not finished. Such a student will receive 0 (zero) points for the entire exam/test/quiz.
2. If the second misconduct/violation occurs, the student will receive an F for the entire course.

All assignments/tests/exams you submit in class or upload to Canvas must have your clearly printed name. By writing your name on the homework, it serves as your signature certifying that you have followed all honor codes. If there is no name on the work you submit, it may be rejected.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment

to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Attendance and/or Participation

Although an online course offers greater flexibility, please remember that your timely participation and online engagement is key to your success in this course, as well as that of your classmates.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

No late assignments or extensions will be granted. Please plan accordingly. Contact your instructor in the case of extenuating circumstances.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Campus Resources for Students

The Center for Academic Success (success.gatech.edu/) offers a variety of academic support services to help students succeed academically at Georgia Tech (e.g. tutoring, peer-led study groups, study skills, etc.).

The Office of Disability Services (disabilityservices.gatech.edu/) ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to all programs and activities offered at Georgia Tech. They provide documentation and officially sanctioned requests for accommodation for students, and serve as a resource for instructors as they build learning environments to meet the needs of all students.

OMED: Educational Services (omed.gatech.edu/) is the unit charged by Georgia Tech with the retention, development, and performance of the complete student learner who is traditionally underrepresented: African American, Hispanic, and Native American. OMED's programming and academic support services are aimed at equipping all students with strategies to navigate the Georgia Tech environment.

Support for Students in Distress

Counseling Center counseling.gatech.edu/ 404-894-2575

Dean of Students (Student Life) studentlife.gatech.edu/ 404-385-8772

GT Police police.gatech.edu/ 404-894-2500

Stamps Health Services health.gatech.edu/ 404-894-1420

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Humanities area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence