



**PS 460: Japanese Food Politics**  
**Instructor: Dr. Lauren McKee**  
**KIIS Japan, Summer 2022**

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Course Description and Learning Outcomes:

Food and politics are never very far apart. Romans gave their serfs “bread and circuses” to keep them from rebelling; Marie Antoinette is remembered for supposedly declaring, “Let them eat cake”; even Herbert Hoover promised Americans a “chicken in every pot” should they elect him in the 1920s.

In Japan, food also has much to say about society and politics; economics and trade; male and female roles; national identities; regional disputes; and global forces. This class aims to explore the politics of Japanese food both as a domestic product and global commodity by relating consumption to economic flows, cultural practice, foreign policy, and globalization. By the end of the class, students should be able to analyze food not just as a means of nutrition but as a political, cultural and economic product to be consumed.

**Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:**

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

\*This syllabus is subject to change\*

Recommended Texts:

Various readings in PDF form you should print out and bring with you to Japan.  
*Kitchen*, Yoshimoto Banana

Email: mckeel@berea.edu



You'll need a notebook for your food reflection journal

Assignments:

**Attendance and class participation in discussion (20%)**

Class meeting time in Nara: 10:35-12:05

Class meeting time in Kyoto: 10:50-12:20

**Food Reflection Journal (40%)**

Each week you will turn in your food journal and spend a few minutes during class discussing what you chose to write about that week. Rather than a diary that simply records what you eat, each week's reflection will be centered around a theme, a particular food, or something from the readings or class that you are able to connect to the foods you are eating or the experiences you're having associated with food (seeking out a new restaurant to try, for example). Each week's entry should be at least 500 words, and can be accompanied with photos, drawings, or other creative aspects.

**Class presentation (40%)**

At the end of the class, you will make a presentation to the class that is a reflective summation of your experiences eating and learning in Japan.

Schedule:

**Week 1: June 4-June 10: Nara**

M June 4: Explore Nara!

T June 5: Introduction to the Course, Understanding food as a political product and choice  
Readings: Selections from *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*

W June 6-TH June 7: Food and War  
Readings: "The Culinary Consequences of Japanese Imperialism"  
"The Social History of Ramen"

F June 8- S June 9: Tea  
Readings: "Tea Ceremony Fact Sheet"  
"The Book of Tea"  
"Status Conflict: The Rebellion of the Tea Pourers"  
\*Discuss 1<sup>st</sup> food journal entry\*

S June 10: UJI: Byodoin/Meet host family

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## **Week 2: June 11-17: Nara Home-Stay**

*M June 11: Tenri Elementary and Tenri University*

T June 12: Alcohol, Health, and Gender

Readings: Selections from *Japan, Alcoholism, and Masculinity: Suffering Sobriety in Tokyo*

W June 13: Obentos, Mothers, and Gender Construction

Readings: “Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus”  
“The Overcooked and Underdone: Masculinities in Japanese Food Programming”

TH June 14- F June 15: Globalization

Readings: “How Colonel Sanders Became Father Christmas in Japan”

“Measuring Metabo”

“How Sushi Went Global”

“In Sake, Japan Sees Potential Stimulus”

*\*Discuss 2<sup>nd</sup> food journal entry\**

*S June 16-S June 17: Activities with Host family*

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## **Week 3: June 18-24: Tokyo and Hiroshima**

M June 18: Travel day to Tokyo (Kabuki)

T June 19: Visit Nikko

W June 20: Tokyo National Museum, Tsukiji, Embassy, Asakusa

TH June 21: Free Day

F June 22: Travel to Hiroshima/ Peace Park and Memorial

Reading: “Savor Slowly: Ekiben”

S June 23: Miyajima

*\*Turn in 3<sup>rd</sup> food journal enty\**

S June 24: Himeji

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## **Week 4: June 25-July 1: Kyoto**



M June 25- T June 26: *Kitchen*  
Nishiki and Kiyomizu

W June 27: Food and Trade  
Readings: “Agricultural Impact of the Nuclear Disaster”  
“WTO Negotiations and Trade Issues in Japan”  
Kinkaku-ji and Ryoan-ji

TH June 28: Final Project Presentations  
Inari Taisha

F June 29: Final Project Presentations/ Exam  
Farewell party

S June 30-S July 1: Free days

July 2: Departure

**Attendance Policy:**

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student’s final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

**Disability Accommodation:**

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, [maria.canning@wku.edu](mailto:maria.canning@wku.edu), to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto:haley.mctaggart@wku.edu), if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.



If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

### **Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:**

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Deborah Wilkins (270-745-5396 / [deborah.wilkins@wku.edu](mailto:deborah.wilkins@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)) or Joshua Hayes (270-745-5121 / [joshua.hayes@wku.edu](mailto:joshua.hayes@wku.edu)). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/eo/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.