



KIIS Japan Program, Summer 2025

ENG 290 / ARC 401 Topics: Women in Japanese Literature

Instructor: Prof. K. Sheehan

Email: knshee01@louisville.edu

Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

Course Description: This course will cover Japanese literature, in various genres, from the Nara period to the contemporary Japan. Japanese cultural ideas, such as ninjō and giri, will be examined as they appear in the reading, all with the aim of gaining deeper insight into the culture and mindset of the Japanese. Stories set in Tokyo, Kyoto, and other locations will give the students the particular perspective of these cities, their residents, and their culture. The texts will be chosen to help generate critical thinking about the role of gender, class, and historical events in the formation of the culture.

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.

Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes: Through critical reading and interpretation of the various Japanese works, students will gain insights into the Japanese

language, literature, and culture. Students will gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of a culture different from their own through that culture's products of popular culture. Upon completion of ML/J PST 345, students will be able to think critically, use written communication to express and analyze aspects of Japanese culture and history, as well as objectively compare and contrast Japanese culture to their own respective cultures.

Fulfillment of General Education Requirement: (If applicable, i.e. if you feel that your KIIS course will fulfill/satisfy a Gen. Ed. requirement at your institution— more likely a possibility if you are teaching a non-Topics course— please list briefly the way your KIIS course will fulfill the Gen. Ed. requirements. If this section is not applicable to your course, you may delete this section (#5) from your syllabus.)

Required Readings and Materials:

PDFs of short stories, excerpts, and articles; provided by instructor

Graded Assignments:

Students will submit assignments by the start of class. Students will be graded and evaluated through the following assignments and grading scale:

Grading Scale: A 100-90; B 89-80; C 79-70; D 69-60

- 1. First Impressions (10% of grade):** Write a 300-word reflection of your initial impression of Japan so far and how it connects to works you may have read prior to the course. What expectations do you have of Japan and why might you want to temper them? How has Japanese literature/media shaped certain images of Japan? What may be a topic related to women and Japanese literature that you want to explore this semester? This reflection needs to be free of errors, written in complete sentences, and contain at least one cited quote from the textbook. It will be graded based on quality, clarity, and thoughtfulness.
- 2. Reading Reflections (10%):** Students will respond to a series of questions through Google Forms based on the assigned readings. Within the forms will be at least one question focuses on a close reading of an assigned short story. In these reflections, students will compare and contrast, but also analyze and discuss historical contexts and the shifts in cultural trends at the time the short stories were written. For instance, they should consider the role of gender in the culture, what was happening historically, the background of the author, and how these elements inform their understanding of the culture. This will help prepare students for the final assignment. This assignment will use multiple choice, as well as short answer which must use cited quotes from course materials,
- 3. Site Visit/(Personal) Excursion Essays (15% of grade):** Throughout the semester, each student will write † short essay on the sites that they visit, or what they encountered on their own excursions, and compare it to the setting, tone, or themes of at least one of the assigned readings. Students should consider the following: was the location as the student imagined it? How does the location appear compared to the author's descriptions of life and settings in Japan? Why are location and setting important to a story? Could seeing the physical location of a story possibly affect the reader? These essays should be at least 600 words, use cited quotes from course materials, 12-point

Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and may use any citation method (MLA, Chicago Style, APA, etc.) so long as it is consistent.

- 4. Journal Reflection (20%):** Students are encouraged to keep a journal for the first two weeks of the program. In this time, students should visit at least one bookstore to observe what kinds of literature there are, what the works by women look like, and ask at least one Japanese person what their favorite book/manga by a female author is. In a 500 word reflection, students will consider how the short stories have reflected or connected to the themes, descriptions, and/or symbolism in their experiences in Japan. This assignment must include one cited quote from the readings and one quote from a Japanese person. The reflection should be 12-point font, Times New Roman, and MLA formatted or use another citation method, such as Chicago Style.
- 5. Outline or Draft Peer Review (20% of grade):** The final assignment for this course is a critical essay. Bringing an outline or draft for this final assignment will give students the opportunity to think more critically about the themes, critique, and other aspects of the assigned readings. As this is a draft or general outline, students should demonstrate thoughtful consideration of Japanese literature and how it connects to something that interests them specifically. This may be a further examination of something like gender roles and how they shift in literature, how globalization has impacted ideas of feminism in Japanese literature, and so on. Students should be prepared to discuss their outlines/drafts with classmates and the instructor for feedback. We will also discuss finding sources for the annotations.
- 6. Critical Essay on Japanese Women's Literature (25% of grade):** This essay should focus on one particular aspect of Japanese literature as it relates to the course (gender, women's roles, ethnicity, class, etc.); research should take into consideration multiple perspectives, as well as historical, cultural, and social contexts. This essay should build upon the assignments that have been completed this semester. It should be at least 1500 words in length, and include the following: A) a title, B) introduction, C) a clear thesis, and D) a conclusion. The essay must include at least 4 scholarly sources (assigned materials do not count). **Do not use non-scholarly sources such as Wikipedia, travel blogs, Britannica, TikTok, Medium, or YouTube for your sources.** The essay should be 12-point font, Times New Roman, and MLA formatted or use another citation method, such as Chicago Style.

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, 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, 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, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu) or Joshua Hayes (270-745-5121 / 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.