



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Japan Program, Summer 2026

ART 491/ARC 401: Yokai as an Art and Entertainment

Instructor: Prof. Miyuki Akai Cook

Email: cookm@marshall.edu

Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description:

Yokai refers to legendary ghosts, monsters, and spirits from Japanese folklore. Yokai have been a part of Japanese mythology for centuries, and their stories are often passed down through generations. Yokai was used to describe supernatural events in ancient times when science did not exist. Since the woodblock print technique improved in the Edo period, artists have visualized Yokai figures and printed them in books. Today, the concept of Yokai continues to be a significant presence in modern Japanese media, including anime, manga, and video games. This course will examine how Yokai has existed in Japanese society from ancient to today.

2. 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.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

- Learn the history of Yokai and its historical background.
- Recognize artistic sources for Yokai forms and classifications.
- Understand how Yokai has evolved in diverse ways from folklore in the Edo period, such as ukiyo-e, emakimono, and kabuki.
- Explore Yokai in contemporary Japanese popular culture, including anime, manga, and video games.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

Yokai are supernatural beings, phenomena, or monsters in Japanese folklore. These entities have been a part of Japanese culture for centuries, deeply ingrained in their mythology, literature, art, and everyday life. In this course, we will examine how Yokai idea appeared in folklore and how it gained popularity in Japanese art and literacy.

1. The origin and history of Yokai
2. The visualization of Yokai by artists in the history
3. The distribution of the Yokai story in the ancient society
4. Yokai's appearance in contemporary entertainment

6. Required Readings and Materials: The course will use online sites such as Google Forms, National Diet Library Digital Collection, and YouTube, as well as articles from books and online sources.

- A. Drawing and coloring tools.
- B. Sketchbook(s). Let's buy this on-site! B6
- C. Drawing and coloring tools or a tablet with a drawing app for the Original Yokai Zine project if you choose to do it digitally.
You don't have to buy a new set if you already own one. You can also purchase on-site.
 - 12 + coloring pencils
 - Drawing makers
 - Procreate or equivalent apps on a laptop or tablet

7. Graded Assignments:

- 100 pts – Yokai Field Journal
- 150 pts – Yokai Reimagined: Mixed Media Art
- 50 pts – Essay on the movie
- 50 pts – Interview Japanese Students
- 150 pts – Online test
- 300 pts – Original Yokai
- 100 pts – Active Participation: excursions and discussions
- 100 pts – Required reading or video and informal writing/discussion

Work will be graded on this scale:

900 – 1000 A

800 – 899 B

700 – 799 C

600 – 699 D

Below 600 E (F)

Note KIIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.)

Yokai Field Journal (100 pts)

Objective: To observe and document Yokai imagery in Japan's contemporary culture.

Task: Keep a journal for sketching and writing about Yokai you encounter in museums, temples, manga, advertisements, or local folklore. Include reflections on how these creatures function in modern Japanese society.

Yokai Reimagined: Mixed-Media Artwork (150 pts)

Objective: Have students reinterpret a classic Yokai through contemporary artistic techniques.

Task: Each student selects a traditional Yokai and reimagines it using a medium of their choice (e.g., ink drawing, digital painting, collage, stickers, markers, watercolor). Blend traditional Japanese aesthetics with modern influences.

Essay on a Movie (50 pts)

Objective: To watch the movie with the new aspect focusing on Yokai and to read the message behind.

Interview Japanese Students (500 pts)

Objective: To find what today's Japanese students' favorite yokai

Online test (150 pts)

Original Yokai Zine (300 pts)

Objective: Synthesize research and creativity into an original story with a visual image of Yokai.

Task: Throughout the trip, students contribute sketches, short comics, folklore research, and contemporary sightings of Yokai to a collaborative digital or physical zine.

Create 6~10 page story with a Yokai.

8. 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.

9. 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 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 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.

10. 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 Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@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/titleix/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.