



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Japan Program, Summer 2026

ART 496 / ARC 401 Topics: Japan: Art, Nature and Culture

Instructor: Ying Kit Chan

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description:

"Japan: Art, Nature, and Culture" is a studio art course designed for students of all levels to create artwork inspired by Japan's rich cultural traditions and stunning natural beauty. Students will have the flexibility to use a variety of mediums and formats, including painting, drawing, printmaking, mixed media, photography, video, and digital art.

Participants will develop their project through personal research and artistic exploration, drawing inspiration from every aspect of Japan, such as customs, philosophy, shrines, temples, gardens, festivals, crafts, designs, woodcut prints, manga, calligraphy, landscapes, flora and fauna.

This course is ideal for students of all majors to develop their artistic expression while studying in Japan. By the end of the program, students will have produced a body of work that reflects both their creative vision and their appreciation of Japanese unique land and culture.

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:

- Creative Expression: Students will demonstrate the ability to express ideas and emotions through their chosen art forms, utilizing techniques from one or multiple mediums.
- Technical Skills: Students will acquire, develop, and apply fundamental techniques in their chosen medium or across multiple mediums to create cohesive works of art.
- Formal and Historical Understanding: Students will learn about formal elements and principles of composition, lines, shapes, texture, and color, as well as their context in movements and styles in art history.
- Critical Thinking: Students will develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and interpreting artworks from various historical, cultural, and societal perspectives.
- Interdisciplinary Connections: Students will explore and integrate concepts from other disciplines (such as literature, science, and philosophy) into their visual art projects, reflecting a broader understanding of the world.
- Cultural Awareness: Students will investigate and incorporate elements from Japanese cultures and nature, fostering respect for cultural differences and an appreciation of global art movements.
- Art Critique: Students will participate in peer critiques, developing skills to provide constructive feedback and articulate their artistic intentions clearly.
- Portfolio Development: Students will curate a portfolio that demonstrates their growth as student artists, showcasing their ability to work across mediums, subjects, and concepts.
- Research and Reflection: Students will research Japanese arts, cultures, landscapes, and environments, reflecting on formulating their own artistic practice and personal style.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

- Formal Concerns: Student will learn about formal elements and principles including composition, line, shapes, texture and color.
- Materials and Tools: Student will explore and develop work with their chosen mediums
- Concepts and Contexts: Student will develop work and articulate their concepts in the context of contemporary global art.
- Critique and Discussion: Students will engage in constructive discussion and critique to develop the ability to evaluate and improve one's work.
- On location in Japan: Students will develop a portfolio of works inspired by Japan's beautiful scenery, unique traditions, and fascinating visual culture.
- Research and Reflection: Students will research Japanese arts, cultures, landscapes, and environments, reflecting on formulating their own artistic practice and personal style.
- Portfolio Development: Students will curate a portfolio that demonstrates their growth as student artists, showcasing their ability to work across mediums, subjects, and concepts.

5. 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.)

6. Required Readings and Materials:

- Pencils and/or Pens: graphite pencils (various grades including HB, 2B, 4B), a pencil sharpener, and a soft rubber eraser, and/or Pens: Staedtler Pigment Liner Pens, black, 0.5mm.
- Small Sketchbook: a dedicated Moleskin Art Collection sketchbook (5x8.25 inches, 78 pages) for sketches and notes.

Optional materials/mediums (choose at least one):

Since this course is not medium-specific, you may choose one or more of the following to produce a coherent body of work:

- (Option 1) Colored Pencils: drawing paper and a basic set of colored pencils (Prismacolor or Faber-Castell).
- (Option 2) Watercolor: Watercolor paper, watercolor set, brushes, and mixing tray.
- (Option 3) Digital Drawing: tablets such as iPad and drawing apps.
- (Option 4) Digital Photography or Video: phone, tablet, camera, or laptop and editing apps.
- (Option 5) Contemporary mixed media art projects: materials such as paper, paint, fabric, plastic, and found objects may be used.
- (Option 6) For advanced art students only: while materials such as glass, wood, metal and ceramics, or large paintings, sculpture, or installation are not feasible to produce in Japan due to equipment/space limitations and difficulty of transporting the work back to the US, the student may formulate concepts, create sketches and models/maquettes while in Japan.

7. Graded Assignments:

Attendance and class participation (30%)

Regular attendance, punctuality in class, and active participation in group discussion and critiques.

Proposal (10%)

Before departing for Japan, submit a proposal for the plan of your art project. This proposal should specify the mediums you plan to use, the number of pieces you will create, their sizes, and the project's overall concept. You may also include images of your previous work or works by artists who inspire you.

Project (40%)

The project will include exercises and produce work throughout the course. You will be expected to have a final selection of a series of works or one large project based on the approved proposed project. In addition, you will submit the small sketchbook, which should contain sketches and notes, as well as the written assignments throughout the course.

The final presentation of the portfolio (20%)

At the end of the course, present your artwork to the class, which is the culmination of the course, demonstrating artistic growth and representing your experiences in Japan.

Work will be graded on this scale:

90 – 100 A

80 – 89 B

70 – 79 C

60 – 69 D

Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.)

8. Generative AI Policy:

Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.

Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can “hallucinate” (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.
- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

"I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.]."

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.