

# Japanese Literature

online

## Instructor

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## Office Hours

MTWTF: 1-4 pm



Scene from Yasujiro Ozu's "Equinox Flower." 1958.

## Texts

### In order of reading

1. *The Penguin book of Japanese Verse*. Eds. Anthony Thwaite and Geoffrey Bownas. 2009. ISBN: 9780141190945
2. Murasaki, Shikibu. *Tale of Genji*. Trans. Dennis Washburn. Norton. ISBN 978-0-393-93398-7
3. Soseki, Natsume. *I am a Cat*. Tuttle, 2001. ISBN:9780804832656
4. Akutagawa, Ryunosuke. *Rashomon and Other Stories*. Tuttle. 2018. ISBN:9784805314630
5. Tanizaki, Junichiro. *Naomi*. Vintage. 2001. ISBN 9780375724749
6. Kirino, Natsuo. *Out*. Vintage. 2005. ISBN 9781400078370

## Course Description

This course is a broad survey of Japanese literature from its beginnings to the present. Japanese literature is distinguished by its affinity to other arts. Japanese poetry appeals to the eye, for example, because it's modeled on sumie painting. Poems were drawn alongside images often in one hanging picture. The written word, expressed through the Chinese ideogram and painted by hand, was in itself more artful and pictorial. It was part of a unified artistic sensibility with chanoi—tea ceremony—at its center. When one drank tea, they admired the pottery, enjoyed witty repartee, invented poems, glanced at the flower arrangement and art in the tokonoma (architectural recess for artwork), viewed the garden and appreciated nature.

Literature in Japan, as elsewhere, is a reflection of its social and belief systems. The samurai system resulted in a strict class system, and Confucianism demanded respect for one's elders and the family unit. The samurai class cultivated the arts as a sign of civility and status. Beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,

the merchant class did the same. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, progressive influences from the West led Japanese writers to question class inequalities and the commodification of art. Buddhism suffuses literature through its long history, introducing concepts like *sabi* (rough solitariness), *aware* (transitoriness), and *yugen* (obscure mystery). Buddhism casts doubt on dualistic forms of thought and recognizes the illusory nature of logic. Unlike the Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition, which often rejects the worldly, Shinto identifies the sacred in nature.

Japanese literature can be understood in these cultural contexts. It can be described as distinct and radically different. But parallels can also be drawn between East and West. Japanese literature had a significant affect on American literature. Ezra Pound's discovery of imagism in Chinese and Japanese poetry determined the form American poetry from William Carlos Williams and H.D. to Allen Ginsburg, Gary Snyder and W.S. Merwin. Japanese films also influenced Western cinema. The so-called "children of Kurosawa" include George Lucas, Sergio Leone, and Richard Linklater. Movements like symbolism, realism, impressionism, surrealism, and feminism all had an influence on Japanese literature, but Japanese literature also inspired these movement and made its own contribution.

### Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to

1. Develop an awareness of the Japanese literary tradition.
2. Understand issues in class, gender, and the environment in the development of Japanese society as expressed through literature.
3. Use literature of the past as a means of critically understanding Japanese and American society today.
4. Apply techniques of literary research and criticism to write about writing.
5. Use theoretical concepts in Japanese literature as a lens for interpretation and study current scholarship in Japanese literary criticism in English.
6. Understand the formal features, aesthetic concepts, figurative language, and tropes used in Japanese literature.

### Graduate Program in English Learning Outcomes

#### ENGLISH (GRADUATE)

Graduate students will be able to

1. **SLO 1** – Students will demonstrate a critical understanding of the significance of major authors, literary works in different genres, and definitive literary movements in literature, theory, and writing, as focused by their programs.
2. **SLO 2** – Students will demonstrate the ability to critically analyze and interpret literature, theory, and writing, as focused by their programs.
3. **SLO 3** – Students will demonstrate the ability to conduct and utilize research methodologies in the study of literature, theory, and writing, as focused by their programs.

## Projects

### I. Discussion Posts (300 points; 10 posts, 30 points each)

Submit two posts per week to the discussion board. The discussion post builds a community of readers and encourages all of us to read regularly. Some of the posts will be on topics other than the reading: the term paper project, research, and course feedback and reflection.

I would like students to hone their skills in integrating outside scholarly criticism with their own arguments. Some of the books I assigned are “critical editions,” which contain important scholarship on the text, which can provide a lens for interpretation and raise questions for interpretation. For other texts, you and I will have to find criticism through databases, like MLA. In general, when you write a post on a work of literature, also comment on relevant criticism.

The length of each post should be around 300 words, which should be about three paragraphs. Although summarizing is one step in analysis, focus on raising questions, interpreting, and responding critically. To develop your ideas, use quotes. Another good strategy is to consider the reading through reference to other literature you know: inter-textual reading. I would like our posts to function like a conversation in which we respond to each other’s ideas as well. When other projects are due, no discussion post will be due.

### II. Response Papers (300 points; 2 total; 150 points each)

A response paper is a brief interpretive analysis. Like a longer term paper, it requires close reading. There may be references to literary theory and published scholarship, but of the brevity of a response paper the emphasis is on close reading of the primary text through the analysis of quotes. These should stretch your interpretive muscles, give you a deeper understanding of texts, and give a deeper awareness of the Japanese literary tradition. The response paper should be at least six pages in length.

### III. Reports on Criticism (100 points; 2 presentations; 50 points each)

I will assign each student to give two presentations on critical scholarship in Japanese literature. Students will be assigned a piece of criticism during the first half of the term. In the second half of the term, they will give a presentation based on a piece of criticism they find themselves on their term paper topic. Presentations can be recorded on PowerPoint and shared with the class or presented during an agreed class time through Bb Collaborate.

### III. Term Paper (300 points; due on the last day of class—July 1)

The term paper can focus on one aspect of one work of literature or compare two works of literature. A statement of purpose should be posted to the discussion board at least one week before the paper is due. We will share ideas for papers and help each other through peer review and editing. Format: 15 pages; MLA style; analytical close reading—use quotes; consult scholarship on your topic and juxtapose your ideas to theirs.

PROJECTS	Due Date	%	Points
Posts to the class Discussion Board (10 in number)		30	300 30 pts each
Response papers		3	300

			150 pts each
Reports on Criticism			
Term Paper 12-15 pages in length	July 1	30	300
Conferencing	5 sessions; once every 3 weeks	10	100
Total Points Available		100	1000

### Deadlines

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments will be turned in at the beginning of class on their due dates. All alternative arrangements must be approved before the relevant deadline. Late work without previous arrangement with me will only be accepted upon demonstration of extenuating circumstances.

### Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

### Class Participation

Class participation is shown through meeting with the instructor in online conferences, dialog through email, the discussion boards, and the timely submission of projects. There is no separate grade for class participation.

### Blackboard

If you confront technical issues which interfere with your ability to use Blackboard, contact the LTAC (Lobo Technology Assistance Center) at 432-837-8888 or <https://techassist.sulross.edu>

### Accommodating Students with Disabilities and Counseling Services

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

or call 432 837-8203.

E-mail: [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu).

**SRSU Library Services**

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine. Offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library’s website, [library.sulross.edu](http://library.sulross.edu). Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or phone (432-837-8123).

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

Dishonest acts, such as plagiarism (using words or a specific author’s ideas from another source without acknowledging the source) or collusion (having other people write parts of your paper for you), may result in an “F” on the assignment and may lead to a disciplinary hearing conducted through the office of the Dean of Students, which could result in suspension or expulsion from SRSU. If you have questions about whether your use of other sources (such as books, websites, friends, or Writing Center tutors) is fair or not, please ask before turning in the work that you have a question about.

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person’s work as one’s own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

**COURSE CALENDAR**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>Week 1</b>			
6.1 W	<i>Penguin Book of Japanese Verse: 3-89</i>		
6.2 TH	<i>Penguin Book of Japanese Verse: 3-89</i>	<b>Discussion Post 1, Introductions</b>	
6.3 F	<i>The Tale of Genji</i> by Murasaki Shikibu	<b>Discussion Post 2 on Poetry from the Nara and Heian jidai.</b>	
<b>Week 2</b>			
6.6 M	<i>The Tale of Genji</i> by Murasaki Shikibu		Japanese myth and folklore
6.7 T	<i>The Tale of Genji</i> by Murasaki Shikibu	<b>Discussion Post 3 on <i>The Tale of Genji</i></b>	
6.8 W	<i>Penguin Book of Japanese Verse, Kamakura, Muromachi</i>		

	jidai: <i>See particularly Saigyō,</i>		
6.9 TH	<i>Penguin Book of Japanese Verse</i> , Edo jidai: See particularly Bashō, Kikaku, Buson, Issa, and Chikamatsu	<b>Discussion Post 4 on haiku and related forms</b>	
6.10 F	<i>Penguin Book of Japanese Verse</i> , Edo jidai: See particularly Bashō, Kikaku, Buson, Issa, and Chikamatsu	<b>Presentation on Criticism, assigned by instructor</b>	Film "A Tale from Chikamatsu." Directed by Kenji Mizoguchi
<b>Week 3</b>			
6.13 M	<i>Penguin Book of Japanese Verse</i> , Modern poets	<b>Response Paper 1 due</b>	Lafcadio Hearn's folktales and Japanese theatre
6.14 T	<i>I am a Cat</i> by Natsume Soseki		
6.15 W	<i>I am a Cat</i> by Natsume Soseki	<b>Discussion Post 5 on poetry, bunraku, kabuki</b>	
6.16 TH	<i>I am a Cat</i> by Natsume Soseki		
6.17 F	<i>I am a Cat</i> by Natsume Soseki	<b>Discussion Post 6 on Soseki</b>	Film "Autumn Equinox." Directed by Yasujiro Ozu
<b>Week 4</b>			
6.20 M	"In Praise of Shadows" by Junickiro Tanizaki	<b>Response Paper 2 Due</b>	Manga
6.21 T	<i>Naomi</i> by Junickiro Tanizaki		
6.22 W	<i>Naomi</i> by Junickiro Tanizaki  And manga		
6.23 TH	<i>Naomi</i> by Junickiro Tanizaki  And manga	<b>Discussion Post 7 on Tanizaki or mana</b>	
6.24 F	<i>Rashomon and Other Stories</i> by Ryunosuke Akutagawa	<b>Discussion Post 8 Statement of purpose for term paper</b>	Film "Rashomon." Directed by Akira Kurosawa

<b>Week 5</b>			
6.27 M	<i>Rashomon and Other Stories</i> by Ryunosuke Akutagawa	<b>Presentation 2 on Scholarly Criticism on your term paper topic</b>	Last day to drop with W
6.28 T	<i>Rashomon and Other Stories</i> by Ryunosuke Akutagawa		
6.29 W	<i>Out</i> by Natsuo Kirino	<b>Discussion Post 9: Paper introduction or close reading</b>	
6.30 TH	<i>Out</i> by Natsuo Kirino		
7.1 F	<i>Out</i> by Natsuo Kirino	Term Paper Due	
<b>Week 6</b>			
7.5 M		<b>Discussion Post 10: class reflection</b>	
7.6 T			Grades submitted to Registrar