

Course details (syllabus) & other information

Japan 7A — Introduction to Premodern Japanese Literature & Culture

Fall 2011

Instructor: John R. Wallace

Meets: T&Th 12:30–2PM (confirm class location at Online Schedule of Classes)

Special note

This document contains critical information about course content, procedures, policies and grade calculations. Please read it carefully and **review it once or twice during the term**. I assume that you understand its content in full. Please contact me if you have questions. General comments about my expectations and scoring well in this class are at the very end of this document. Key portions are highlighted in yellow. Please read the syllabus in full, of course, but you might use these highlighted areas for review.

Communicating with each otherHow to reach me

My office is Dwinelle 3409. The Announcements Page, the Course Outline page and the Course Session Details pages all have links stating my office hours and how to email me. **Students are required to use special subject line formats for assignment submission and I implore you to continue with the same system when writing me about other things.**

- ♦ **I often do not check email after 9:30PM** and I'm a little less regular about reading emails during weekends and holidays.
- ♦ **Please be aware that I might share your email with one or both GSIs**, for teaching purposes. If you would like a certain email to be just between us, please say so in the email. This is also true of emails sent between you and any GSI.

If you are interested as to why I have a specific system for subject lines: I encourage email exchanges, I like to discuss intellectual matters with you, I am ready to hear your concerns about something and I run a nearly paperless class which means all submissions are electronic. These things, in combination, create an enormous amount of email traffic—2,000-3,000 class-related emails going through my in-box every semester. Without a system to filter and organize these, I might miss an important email or you might be recorded as not having submitted something you actually submitted. These errors, once they occur, do not always get fixed.

This class uses two web sites (www.sonic.net/~tabine & bspace.berkeley.edu) for announcements, schedules and materials access

Because of their different capabilities, this class uses a primary and secondary Web site. Below is a table explaining what material is where.

PRIMARY (sonic.net) (public access)	PRIMARY (sonic.net) (public access)	SECONDARY (bSpace) (materials that require restricted access)
Announcements Page	Course Home Pages (Outline and Session-by-session details)	
announcements link to Course Home Page	class policies, syllabus, assignment & test information, grade calculation, links to other course Web pages, class schedule, general thoughts on a session, all deadlines, links to other resources	course materials (texts, vocab glosses, sound files, powerpoints, etc.) unofficial grade postings interactive forums (chats & forums)

Off-campus individuals following my class via podcasts, please email me. I might have created a shadow bSpace site for you (that has course materials not subject to copyright limitations). Please include in your subject line this keyword "podcast" because I often cannot respond quickly to these requests and within a few days your email might go missing in my in-box.

Class announcements (Announcements Page)

Where to look for announcements?

In the days and weeks before class begins, I might contact the class using the message tool on bSpace. These emails will go to enrolled and waitlisted students. At some point I “hand-off” announcements to my Announcements Page Web site with a class-wide email that says so. The student now needs to navigate to that site to read announcements. There will be no emails except under special circumstances. After class stops meeting but until grades are submitted, I continue to use the Announcements Page. Once I submit grades, I will begin using bSpace again to notify students if any additional announcements have been made.

Announcements Page Web Site

- ◆ The Announcements Page is designed to load quickly on smartphones, and includes a direct link to the Course Home Page.
- ◆ **Remember to refresh your browser** to insure you are seeing the newest version of the page.
- ◆ **Please check the Announcements Page frequently** beginning a few days before the start of the course until I announce that I have submitted final grades.
- ◆ **The classroom is NOT the primary source of information for this class even for very important announcements. The Announcements Page is the official source.** I tend not to like to take up class time with announcements.
- ◆ **I definitely expect a student to have read an announcement within 48 hours of its posting. There can be a serious downside if you do not do this. There is no “second chance” policy.**
- ◆ I will not introduce changes in what needs to be done for a class in the 24 hours prior to the class.

Class sessions content, assignments, deadlines (Course Home Pages)

Course Home Page—Outline

This page is provides access to the class schedule for any given day, has access to all deadlines, and lists important dates. I like students to know “where they are” in a class both in terms of assignments and texts but also conceptually (whether that is a historical framework or a topics framework). This page is mean as a visual representation of the class’s overall structure. Therefore I would prefer that you use this page to access individual session pages but I do provide a quick “jump” link in various locations to something close to our current session. (This is a link I manually update, so often I forget or don’t have time to update it.) I encourage you to use the page frequently to access individual sessions, to help you understand where we are. **When it is test time, this is definitely the page that should be the start point for organizing your study plan.**

I plan to “grow” this page as we go along.

Course Home Pages—Session Details

Each day has a page that gives the topics, my thoughts, and so on. **I really hope you look at this page before class.** I lecture in the order of the topics, so having these topics in your notes can help you take more organized notes. The “thoughts” section sometimes is your guide to what will be the main points or focus of the day. This page is sometimes updated after a session is over, to give information multimedia presents, links, add topics or adjust “thoughts”. This is done to help you prepare for exams.

Materials (bSpace)

All material for this class that is not listed for purchase is provided as digital files, usually via bSpace. Please respect copyright laws.

General policies

On the sidebar of the Course Home Page are links to my policies about my efforts to be green in class operation (including an invitation to contact me if my policy is hindering your learning experience), multitasking & laptop use in the classroom, and an extensive expression of my views on academic honesty. **Please read them—some of the information there affects your grade.**

A note on academic honesty

I am very attentive to issues about plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Please read my full statement on these

issues. Access them through the Home Page sidebar by clicking on “Policies > Academic Honesty”. It is difficult to plagiarize in this class but any plagiarism would be so extremely counter to the goals of the class that penalties are severe. The academics honesty page is long, for a web page. Please read it in full by the end of the first week of the term. Ask questions. **After a week I will assume you are fully aware of, and have understood thoroughly, its contents.**

Accommodation for students with disabilities

If you need accommodations for any physical, psychological, or learning disability or if you want me to have emergency medical information, please email me, or speak to me after class or during office hours.

Course content & goals

This class is part lecture *and part discussion* during the regular lecture sections, and active student discussion in the discussion sections taught by GSIs. By the way, discussion sections are *never* for preparing for the midterms. They are for discussing assigned reading and other course content issues.

I am restructuring the class this semester. Things will be messy at times. I am building the class around particular concepts that I think help interpret Japanese premodern cultural expressions in literature, other arts, and some normative values. While reading and interpreting literature remains the primary activity, I plan to increase the number of texts but be more selective in what passages I assign from texts, to leave room for considering as well visual and performing arts, and so on. The basic concepts are listed on the Course Home Page—Outline.

With that as a framework, I can state that the primary components that I will try to arrange within this framework are some of the key literary figures, some of the most outstanding literary works, specific cultural moments (especially 10th c. court life in Heian Japan, the 14th-15th c. Kitayama and Higashiyama shogun retreat cultures of Muromachi Japan, and the 18th c. Yoshiwara district of Edo Japan) and a set of core aesthetic terms. Historical chronology is not the organizing framework for this class but it is referred to frequently and, by the end of the term, you will be expected to be able to place meaningfully within a historical narrative the people and works we study, as well as be able to characterize the major aspects of various eras.

To generate dynamic interaction with the concepts, especially the aesthetic concepts, you will be required to write an analytic essay or complete a project that “bridges” two diverse premodern cultural activities by using one of the concepts introduced in class.

Course prerequisites

This class has no prerequisites.

Course materials

Much of the assigned reading is available at [Analog Books](#) (1816 Euclid Ave. @ North Gate, tel. 843-1816). I encourage you to consider supporting this, or other, local bookstores. Used copies of our books can sometimes be found locally or over the web. Also, all of these books, I believe, have been placed on reserve.

There are two books that need to be purchased for this class.

Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology edited by Helen Craig McCullough and published by Stanford UP. It is in both hardback and paperback, and is widely available.

Genji & Heike: Selections from The Tale of Genji and The Tale of Heike, edited by Helen Craig McCullough and published by Stanford UP. It is in both hardback and paperback, and is widely available.

BUT, you might find that buying the unabridged versions of one or both of these works is a better value in your case, since extra credit is possible in the case of these texts (but requires reading the full version). Details on this issue are on the Home Page sidebar via “Before the course begins ... > Texts to purchase”.

Aside from these books, there will be other readings of short stories, poems and secondary material. They will be provided as pdf files or web links.

Grades

General comments

- Students are always welcome to discuss with me concerns about grades. Using “**gradeissue**” as a keyword in the email subject line insures that I will notice your email and also that I will review the email before final grades are determined.
- “Curved,” when used by me below or in class, means that while I start off with standard cutoffs for letter grades (listed below in this syllabus as “Start point in defining cutoffs ...”), I often adjust these for particular tests or quizzes. The intent is not to create a “bell” curve, but rather to make a grading profile for a particular evaluated event that takes into account the difficulty of the event, how well I think students should be able to perform, and how students have actually performed.
- Some grades are reported to bSpace**, though in some cases this report is several sessions after the grade is determined. I try to keep bSpace more or less current but it is NOT the official grade book record and when I have discussed a grade with a student and changed it, these changes are almost never uploaded to bSpace. (It is not time efficient for me to upload grades on an individual basis.)
- All grades in all categories are either originally in or converted to a **12-pt scale** where A = 12, A- = 11 and so on. (See the charts at the end of this document.) This is also the way grades are communicated. To tell a student that s/he made a 12 on an assignment is to say that s/he received an “A”. Test grades might initially have a raw and/or percent score but this is curved and given a letter grade and it is the letter grade, not the raw score or percent that counts towards the final grade.
- Leaving early or arriving late because of midterms in other classes: I do not consider this a valid reason for missing part of the class.** I do have sympathy with a student’s desire to arrive early to a test room or when a test runs overtime. However, this explanation is so frequently abused that it is difficult to sort out those who legitimately need to do this and those who do not. Therefore, please email me ahead of time if possible and perhaps we can work something out.
- Travel plans:** Students often schedule travel plans very close to class sessions. **I do not consider missed flights, delayed or cancelled flights or inexpensive tickets to be excusable reasons for absences.** I take our class sessions very seriously and hope you will, too.
- I consider the final exam period a firm date.** Please do not ask to take an exam early because you have travel or moving plans.
- I basically never give incompletes in a class.**

About “grade categories” and the “evaluated events” in them

By “evaluated” I mean anything in the class that is scored for a grade, such as a test, or otherwise has an evaluation given it that is relevant to the final grade, such as class participation over the course of the term. In some of my classes, I group evaluated events under various categories, assign a single “category grade” for all of those events, then weigh the few category grades to determine a final course grade. In some classes I don’t group assignments; instead, I treat each as a separate category. This class groups only the grades related to the essay or project into a category.

“Grade categories” & “evaluated events” for this class

- Section attendance is tracked and graded by the GSI.
- This category’s goal:* To encourage the student to attend section. I consider attendance (both section and regular session) to be very important.
- Calculating the attendance category grade:* This is basically an automatically generated grade based on the student’s on-time attendance of his or her DESIGNATED section (except for the first session). The student receives one point for attendance, 0.75 points for late attendance (arrival after role call), 0.5 points for *excused* absences, and no points for attending a section other than the one in which the student is enrolled. “On-time” means being present before the end of roll call. If, for example, there were 13 scheduled section sessions perfect, on-time attendance would earn 13 points.
- The total points earned during the course of the semester are converted to the category grade using the below chart.

grade	points	grade	points	grade	points
12.5 / mid A+	13	9.75 / low B+	≥ 10	2 / D	≥ 7
11.75 / high A-	≥ 12	8 / B-	≥ 9	0 / F	≥ 0
11 / A-	≥ 11	5 / C-	≥ 8		

Grade Category—Class participation:

- ◆ Class participation, even in the “lecture” sessions, is highly valued. It can greatly increase the quality of the course itself. I appreciate students who participate. Please do not multitask in class.
- ◆ *This category’s goal:* I strongly believe in the value of learning through discourse, both speaking *and* listening to others.
- ◆ *Instructions/Description:* By “participation” I mean attentively listening—and not just to the instructor but what other students say—as well as sharing one’s own considered thoughts. I hope that sharing occurs in the classroom; however, comments before class, after class, and via emails (to me or your GSI) can be considered (at my discretion) as a type of participation. Your GSI will have more comments about how s/he will evaluate your participation.
- ◆ *Calculating the participation category grade:*
 - ✧ There are three components to this grade: your section attendance, your GSI’s report of participation in section, and your attentiveness and participation during lecture.
 - ✧ **Multitasking during lectures, even once, (not to mention section!) immediately creates a grade ceiling of “A–” and can go lower quickly.** My standard for keen listening is high and cannot be achieved while multitasking.
 - ✧ Section attendance is considered when the GSI is determining a grade for you. We have a GSI meeting to get a precise rubric on this (among the three of us) but the general outline is “A” level work means coming regularly and on-time to section, be prepared regarding the reading materials, contributing in a way that explores the topic (i.e., isn’t just done to go on record as having said something), and listening attentively to others. I will instruct my GSIs to not place much weight on attendance if the student (for whatever reason) has missed 2 or fewer sessions. Otherwise, they should consider that the student’s attendance pattern is degrading overall participation.
 - ✧ The GSIs are asked to record attendance in the grade book using the following descriptions:

record this phrase	description
“present”	on-time arrival and present for full session
“mostly present”	late arrival (after name called during roll call), or on-time arrival but multitasking, even if briefly, during session
“marginally present”	very late arrival (GSI judgment call), or early departure, or excused absence
“absent”	unexcused absence
“excused absence”	If you email me about your situation, I will consider excusing the absence but it generally needs to be something serious and over which you have little or no control. I will write the GSI, telling him or her to record an excused absence. Your email needs to specify the section number and GSI name, and must have “gradeissue” in the subject line.

Grade Categories: Midterm 01, Midterm 02, Midterm 03:

- ◆ There are 3 midterms.
- ◆ *The category’s goal:* Tests give me a chance to measure how much of the specifics of the class the student has internalized, as well as explore how well the student can think collectively, comparatively and analytically about the presented topics and information up to the time of the test. A test gives the student a chance to review and get a command of details, but also to think over the various topics covered.
- ◆ *Instructions/Description:* Midterms are closed-book, non-cumulative, in-class exams. At this point in time, it is my intention to give two-part tests with the first half checking reading/lecture content closer to a factual level and the second half being a short essay built around an analytic question. I might change this approach. The details will be on the Course Home Page. I will not revise the syllabus.
- ◆ *Grading tests:* Midterms are graded only by me. Tests generally have some extra credit questions. Extra credit is calculated *after* the initial scoring and curving of an exam so that extra credit does not make the test’s curve tougher.
- ◆ *Calculating the midterm category grades:* Each midterm is its own category, so midterm grade = category grade.

Grade Category—Final exam:

- ◆ There is a final exam during the regularly scheduled time during finals week.
- ◆ *The category’s goal:* This is an essay exam that probes the student’s understanding of the main themes, perspectives and core information of the course. The essay question(s) will ask the student to interpret or analyze situations not previously discussed, to measure the ability to understand premodern literary texts and certain core cultural values (social, philosophical, aesthetic) that are key to them.

- ◆ *Instructions/Description:* This is a 1 or 1.5 hour, in-class, cumulative, essay exam.
- ◆ *Grading tests:* I grade all exams. Since time is of an essence, I grade without making margin comments and do not return the exam. I do, however, keep it on file for 1-2 years and you can discuss it with me at a future point in time. I will have made simple comments in the grade book about why I scored it as I did, and, time permitting, a version of these comments is also uploaded to bSpace. Some semesters this is not possible and in the fall especially since I submit grades just a few days ahead of Christmas.
- ◆ *Calculating the test category grade:* The grade on the test equals the category grade.

Grade Category—Analytic essay or analytic project:

- ◆ Details for the essay or project will be accessible through the Course Home Page (sidebar: Assignments), when available. However, briefly said, the essay or project asks you to read in some depth on two topics, then “bridge” between those two topics using one of the concepts taught in class or a substitute concept that we approve. This is a “major” essay or project not so much in its length but in the extent of foundation research expected. One of the GSIs, or me, will be assigned at some point as your mentor. You work with that person through to the end of the essay.
- ◆ *The category’s goal:* The essay is an important part of this class. It has several purposes: a) it is a way for you to become well-informed about aspects of premodern Japanese literature and culture of interest to you, b) it creates a forum for practicing critical & creative analysis, and c) it is formal training in academic essay style.
- ◆ *Instructions/Descriptions:* The essay writing process instructions are specific. They are accessed via the “Class stuff > Essay Process” link on the sidebar of the Home Page. **Definitely read them in full and with care; they include remarks which I treat as reading assignments just like any other in class** (that is, to be read in full and with some care and thought).
- ◆ *Grading steps of the essay:* I am still developing how the grades will be done this semester.
- ◆ *Calculating the essay process category grade:* Not yet determined.

Grade Category — General Extra Credit Events:

- ◆ General extra credit in my classes is an opportunity for a student to stand out a bit, or get credit for exploring something that interests him or her. It is not used to “fix” poor performance in evaluated events of any sort, though it has a slight secondary effect in this way. Students should not think that they can convert “B” averages to “A” averages via general extra credit. The final grade, however, can “lean” upwards when close to a cutoff. See the details below.
- ◆ Extra credit earned on at the level of an evaluated event (such as a submitted piece of writing or a test) is calculated into that assignment’s grade. “General Extra Credit Points” are other types of extra credit actions that aren’t strongly related to a specific graded event. During the course of the term you might hear me say “Extra credit if you ...”. When students complete such suggested activities in good form, I keep a record of it. At the end of the term I look at such activity from a total perspective (the nature of the extra credit work done, the spirit in which it was done, each student’s work in relation to the other extra credit work done by the rest of the class, and so on). I reduce the sum of such activity into simple descriptive tags such as “very strong” “strong” “median” “some” “negligent” “none”. These appear on the grade summary page directly next to the final grade column. They serve as an important reference to me as I reconsider each student’s grade before making a final decision and submitting grades to the University.
- ✧ When a student score is n.4 as a final grade (11.4, 10.4, etc.), “strong” or better extra credit activity might help round the student up in grade level. (Normally an 11.4 is rounded to 11 and an 11.5 is rounded to 12, for example.) This is one of three important ways I use the general extra credit grade category. However, in truth, for most students this will not become an active element, since most students are not on the n.4 (or sometimes n.3) point of the scale.
- ✧ A similar event happens with “very strong” except that the rounding up point is n.3. “Very strong” designations are usually the result of completing in excellent form major extra credit assignments if any are offered.
- ✧ I also use this grade category to help me decide the “A+”s at the end of the term, if there are to be any.
- ✧ The most important plus for the student in terms of general extra credit activity of this sort, aside from the increased learning (and pleasure) that comes from increased participation, is that the student creates for him- or herself a positive environment that might help in some difficult to quantify way.
- ✧ These general extra credit activities are not measured in points and do not help improve weak grades and should never be done under the assumption that they will help reverse a poor grade on an evaluated event.

How grade category scores are weighted for final course grade

Below is how the various category grades weigh against each other. In brief, about half of the grade total for this course is based on your written expression of readings you have done, then about a quarter each of the total is based on exams and preparation/participation. Your GSI has significant input at the time I calculate the course grade.

Participation in section <i>and lecture</i>	13%
Midterm 01	13%
Midterm 02	20%
Midterm 03	20%
Essay/project (multiple steps) or final exam.....	34%

Equivalents of 12-pt scale numbers to letter grades

When a “12-pt scale” grade is reported on bSpace or elsewhere, the letter grade equivalent to that number is:

13 / A+	10 / B+	7 / C+	4 / D+
12 / A	9 / B	6 / C	3 / D
11 / A-	8 / B-	5 / C-	2 / D-
			0 / F

Conversion of 12-pt scale course average to letter grades for the final course grade

At the end of the term, the 12-pt scores for each grade category are calculated together, according to weight, for the final grade. That mathematical result is then rounded to the nearest letter grade step. In other words, an 11.50 is rounded up to 12 while an 11.49 is rounded down to 11, and so on. Below are the cutoffs for each final course letter grade.

Course 12pt average	letter grade reported to the university	Course 12pt average	letter grade reported to the university	Course 12pt average	letter grade reported to the university	Course 12pt average	letter grade reported to the university
When given, highest 1-2 class averages, with general EC events taken into consideration	A+	≥ 9.5	B+	≥ 6.5	C+	≥ 3.5	D+ (NP ↓)
	≥ 11.5 A	≥ 8.5	B	≥ 5.5	C	≥ 2.5	D
	≥ 10.5 A-	≥ 7.5	B-	≥ 4.5	C- (P ↑)	≥ 2	D-
						< 2	F

Average start point in defining cutoffs for grades when "percent correct" is the criterion used to determine a letter grade (multiple-choice tests and such)

≥ 100	A+	≥ 86.5	B+	≥ 76.5	C+	≥ 66.5	D+	< 60	F
≥ 93	A	≥ 83	B	≥ 73	C	≥ 63	D		
≥ 90	A-	≥ 80	B-	≥ 70	C-	≥ 60	D-		

Suggestions for getting the most out of this class, and scoring well

Above all, do the reading and do your best to make it interesting to you. Read thoughtfully, trying to understand the deeper aspects of a text.

Embrace the essay/project process.

Establish a relationship with your GSI. If you are having difficulties with your GSI, please try talking with him or her. If you cannot talk with your GSI, please talk with me. We can chat confidentially.

Feel free to contact me about just about anything. Don't be shy if you have grading or grade concerns.

Attend sections and the regular lecture session regularly and on time. Take good notes during the regular sessions since tests are usually based on content from those classes. Non-native speakers should talk with me or their GSI if there are listening comprehension problems.

Be very careful about deadlines and submission instructions. Submit on time, everything.