Japanese

Professors: Walker, Sugimori

Requirements for the Minor in Japanese

Number of Units
Six units are required.

Required Courses
JAPN 103 Beginning Japanese III, or its approved equivalent.

Three more Kalamazoo College units (or their equivalent) of upper-level Japanese language courses through at least the JAPN 203 level. These may comprise JAPN 201, 202, 203; equivalent units earned during study abroad; or other approved alternatives. Students who repeat the beginning level of language [100 level equivalent] on study abroad, after having taken the first-year sequence on campus already, will be required to take one more language course on campus upon return, at the level in which they place. One Japanese literature in translation course, taken on campus (JAPN 235-239). One other Japanese studies course (may include an approved course taken during study abroad).

Japanese courses

JAPN 101 Beginning Japanese I
Introductory course; basic grammar and vocabulary; emphasis on listening and oral foundations; hiragana and katakana and an introduction to kanji. Students are encouraged to begin this course sequence in their first year in order to complete the three-quarter sequence (JAPN 101, 102, 103) required for study abroad, as well as the second year sequence (JAPN 201, 202, 203) before study abroad.

JAPN 102 Beginning Japanese II
Further introduction to basic grammar and vocabulary; development of fundamental reading and writing skills using hiragana, katakana, and approximately 50 kanji. 
Prerequisite: JAPN-101; Must take JAPN-102L concurrently

JAPN 103 Beginning Japanese III
Reinforcement of basic listening and development of oral and aural competency; further achievement of reading and writing skills using the kana and approximately 100 kanji.
Prerequisite: JAPN-102 or equivalent placement; JAPN-103L must be taken concurrently

JAPN 201 Intermediate Japanese I
Further work in conversation, oral interpretation, and elementary composition using approximately 200 kanji; study of idioms fundamental to an active use of spoken and written Japanese.
Prerequisite: JAPN-103 or equivalent placement; JAPN-201L must be taken concurrently

JAPN 202 Intermediate Japanese II
Further refinement in areas studied in JAPN 201.
Prerequisite: JAPN 201; JAPN-202L must be taken concurrently

JAPN 203 Intermediate Japanese III
Further refinement in areas studied in JAPN 202.
Prerequisite: JAPN-202 or equivalent placement; JAPN-203L must be taken concurrently

JAPN 236 Pre-Modern Japanese Literature
The ghoulish, the monstrous, and the supernatural are staples of familiar Japanese culture like anime, manga, and J-horror but these themes have roots in Japan as old as the written word. This course explores pre-20th century Japanese literature, drama (including noh and kabuki theater), folklore, and visual culture to examine the vengeful ghosts, witches, wizards, fantastic beasts, and ambulatory tea kettles of the premodern Japanese imagination. No knowledge of Japanese language is required.

JAPN 237 Japanese Literature in Translation: Tokugawa (Early Modern)
The Tokugawa period in Japan spanned roughly two hundred fifty years (1603-1867). The central ideology of the state was a combination of Confucianism, a philosophy imported from China, which stressed hierarchical social relationships, loyalty, and honor. With a few exceptions, however, the Tokugawa period was one of peace in which the skills of a warrior were seldom called upon. It saw the urbanization of a number of major cities in Japan, chief among them Edo, Osaka, and Sakai, and along with that urbanization the growth of a money-based economy and an urban, commoner culture. Much of the literature discloses these twin spirits and their conflict. In this course our readings will focus on several genres and authors: the plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon, the prose works of Ihara Saikaku, and the poetry of Bashō.

JAPN 238 Post-War Japanese Literature in Translation
This course surveys important Japanese writers of the post-World War II era, with special attention to the profound transformations that followed the dissolution of the Japanese Empire in 1945. In the immediate postwar period the physical map of “Japan” shrank dramatically, and a national imagination that had for decades ranged across the plains of Manchuria and far into South Asia collapsed in on itself. This course investigates the ways in which prominent writers (and a few filmmakers) confronted this collapse and everything it implied, from a tentative renegotiation of Japan’s place in the world (largely via its relationship with the United States), to a rapidly urbanizing society’s relationship to its own hinterlands. Authors read will include: Natsume Soseki, Mori Ogai, Higuchi Ichiyo, and Tanzaki Jun’ichiro.

JAPN 240 Japanese Culture through Film
From animation to the avant-garde, this course treads the border lines of Japanese film. Students will interrogate both the concept of “national cinema” and the familiar conventions of narrative film through analysis of films that cross international borders as often as they defy formal conventions. The course calls attention to the work of underrepresented demographics within Japanese film, including women (Kawase Naomi) and ethnic Koreans living in Japan (Yang Yong-hi). Animated films include Miyazaki Hayao’s Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Momotaro and the Divine Sea Warriors, the first full length Japanese animation feature. Documentaries examine topics ranging from war crimes to Japanese professional wrestling. No knowledge of Japanese language is required.

JAPN 245 Japanese Language in Society
This course explores several major aspects of language use associated with Japanese culture and society. The course aims not only at familiarizing students with various aspects of Japanese language with reference to culture and society, but also their developing an appreciation for a different culture. When discussing the inherent inter-relationship between language and culture, including the beliefs, values, and social organization, we will focus on the ideas of power, hierarchy, gender, and history. No previous knowledge of Japanese or linguistics is assumed or required. Readings, lectures, and discussion are all in English.

JAPN 250 Manga/Anime and Gender in Modern Japan
Why are manga/anime so popular? Let's find out. This course undertakes a critical analysis of manga (comics) and anime (animation). We will examine these media's historical origins, narrative features, the world's reception and much more. The samurai warrior, the bishōnen (beautiful boy), and the sexy cyborg-gender in Japanese culture has vivid representations. This course explores constructions of masculinity and femininity, paying attention to the figures of the girl as the postwar descendant of the bishōnen, the ostensibly undersocialized otaku and yaoi culture and transgender manga where imagination opens the door to alternate and critical realities.

JAPN 295 Visions of Utopia, Dystopia, and Apocalyptic
From anarchism to Akira, from Buddhism to the bomb, modern Japanese culture has continually produced visions of a world perfected through its own utter devastation. This class explores visions of utopia, dystopia, and apocalypse that reveal volumes about the societies from which they arise, even as they point to the future. Topics include the use of utopic or apocalyptic visions in political discourse, human impact on the natural world and its flourishing or destruction, and the potential of technology to improve human life or to destroy it entirely. Primary readings range from radical Japanese feminism of the early 1900s to the 1954 film Godzilla. Critical readings will introduce ecocritical and post-human approaches to the world in which we live.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only

JAPN 301 High Intermediate Japanese Language
This course is the first level of the third-year Japanese language sequence, offering more advanced training in the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Prerequisite: JAPN-203 or equivalent placement

JAPN 302 High Intermediate Japanese Language II
This course is the second of the third-year Japanese language sequence, offering more advanced training in the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Prerequisite: JAPN-301 or equivalent placement

JAPN 401 Advanced Japanese
This class is an advanced level class. It is expected that students will have a strong base in Japanese grammar and the four language skills of Japanese: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as aspects of Japanese culture and society.

Prerequisite: Placement or at least six-month study abroad and permission.

JAPN 593 Senior Individualized Project
Each program or department sets its own requirements for Senior Individualized Projects done in that department, including the range of acceptable projects, the required background of students doing projects, the format of the SIP, and the expected scope and depth of projects. See the Kalamazoo Curriculum -&gt; Curriculum Details and Policies section of the Academic Catalog for more details.

Prerequisite: Permission of department and SIP supervisor required.

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