

COLT 264gp (22020R)

# Asian Aesthetic & Literary Traditions

Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00am-12:20pm, THH 301

Instructor: Prof. Jason Webb (jasonwebb@usc.edu)

Office hours: by appointment & occasional "open house"

Graduate Teaching Assistants: Lisa Kochinski (kochinsk@usc.edu),

Lyr Colin (ccolin@usc.edu), Emily Warren (ewarren@usc.edu)

*This course introduces East Asian aesthetic and literary traditions via a focus on Japan's Heian period (794-1185) and its aftermath. We will use comparative and interdisciplinary approaches to examine Heian period prose, poetry, calligraphy, clothing, iconography, architecture, and urban layout. Our analyses will entail techniques of close reading, attentiveness to historical context, and the exploration of religious and philosophical assumptions that underlie and animate a broad range of artistic activity. Along the way we also will consider the following questions: how did the inhabitants of ancient East Asia view neighboring countries? In what ways are East Asian traditions "shared" across the region, and in what ways must they be appreciated as distinct to their locale? As we deepen our understanding of ancient Japan, our accumulated knowledge will enable us also to detect ways in which ancient culture has been appropriated in modern and contemporary contexts. For example, during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, how have collective cultural memories of the ancient past been used to shape definitions of ethnic and national identity or to explore other distinctly modern ideas?*

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing this course students will have acquired:

- An understanding of the rich complexity of cultural history in East Asia;
- Appreciation of the dynamism of so-called "premodern" culture;
- Heightened sophistication in analyzing narrative forms;
- Sharpened skills of debate;
- Enriched perspectives on how elements of ancient culture are "put to use" in contemporary contexts;
- An intellectual foundation for future courses related to the study of East Asia.

## WORKLOAD & EVALUATION

Attendance is taken at each lecture. Students are expected to come to lecture already having completed the assigned reading. Lecture sessions will be a combination of explanations offered by the instructor with interpretations and analysis provided by students. We will strive to maintain a dynamic, participatory, interactive atmosphere in which all students are comfortable speaking. It is strongly recommended that the reading assignments for Tuesday and Thursday lectures be read a second or even third time before discussion sections meet. In other words, in order to perform well in the Friday sessions, students should exert themselves to acquire not just familiarity with the week's assignment but rather *command* of its contents. With each participant having attained that degree of mastery of the reading assignment, discussion section conversations are sure to flourish.

**A student's final course grade will be based on the following computation:**

Midterm exam #1 (take-home, Feb. 21) 25%

Midterm exam #2 (take-home, Apr. 5) 25%

Lecture attendance 5%

Discussion section performance 20% (Syllabus will be distributed Thurs., Jan. 19. Students will be expected to write brief weekly responses to the readings.)

Cumulative final exam (take-home, due May 9) 25%

**REQUIRED TEXTS** (available at campus bookstore or online vendors)

Tyler, Royall, compiler and translator, *Japanese Tales*

*All other readings will be made available as pdf files on the course website*

**THE BLACKBOARD COURSE WEBSITE**

The Blackboard course website serves as the hub of communications for the lecture component of COLT 382. The course syllabus is posted there. Information about the reading assignment for each meeting, and in many cases the pdf of the reading itself, will be posted within the Content section in ample time for you to prepare. Zoom recordings of lectures (if mandated by Dornsife) also will be accessible on the Blackboard site. Your test grades will be posted there. Importantly, from time to time the instructor will send out a notification from Blackboard. **In order to ensure that these messages will reach you in a timely way, please be certain that your email system is not classifying them as junk.**

**Class schedule**

- |   |                 |   |
|---|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Tues., Jan. 10  | Course introduction   |
| 2 | Thurs., Jan 12  | <i>Tale of the Bamboo Cutter</i> [pdf]  |
| 3 | Tues., Jan. 17  | <i>Tale of the Bamboo Cutter</i>  |
| 4 | Thurs., Jan. 19 | <i>Tale of the Bamboo Cutter</i><br>AND explanation of discussion section syllabus  |
|   | Fri., Jan. 20   | <b>Discussion sections meet for the first time</b>  |
| 5 | Tues., Jan. 24  | The Heian Capital in Space and Time<br><i>Stavros, Kyoto: An Urban History</i> , excerpts (pdf)   |
| 6 | Thurs., Jan. 26 | <i>Japanese Tales</i> #1  |
| 7 | Tues., Jan. 31  | <b>Guest Lecture: Prof. Lori Meeks</b><br>"Buddhist Practices of the Heian Aristocracy"<br>View recording <b>prior to lecture</b> . Lecture is Q&A with Prof. Meeks |

- 8 Thurs., Feb. 2 Ono no Komachi (pdf)
- 9 Tues., Feb. 7 *Tales of Ise* (pdf)
- 10 Thurs., Feb. 9 *Tales of Ise* (pdf)
- 11 Tues., Feb. 14 *Japanese Tales* #2
- 12 Thurs., Feb. 16 *Japanese Tales* #3  
\*A note on skillful citation

**Midterm Exam #1 issued Friday Feb. 17, 5pm**

- 13 Tues., Feb. 21 **Midterm Exam #1 due 6pm (no lecture)**
- 14 Thurs., Feb. 23 *Pillow Book* (pdf)
- 15 Tues., Feb. 28 *Pillow Book* (pdf)
- 16 Thurs., March 2 *Japanese Tales* #4
- 17 Tues., March 7 **Guest Lecture: Emily Warren**  
“Heian Food and Food Culture”
- 18 Thurs., March 9 Izumi Shikibu

**March 14/16/17 No classes held - enjoy your Spring Break!**

- 19 Tues., Mar. 21 *Hōjōki*
- 20 Thurs., Mar. 23 *Hōjōki*
- 21 Tues., Mar. 28 Film: *Rashōmon* (to be viewed **prior to lecture**)
- 22 Thurs., Mar. 30 *Rashōmon*

**Midterm Exam #2 issued Friday Mar. 31, 5pm**

- 23 Tues., Apr. 4      **Midterm Exam #2 due 6pm (no lecture)**
- 24 Thurs., Apr. 6      *Otogizōshi*
- 25 Tues., Apr. 11      *Otogizōshi*
- 26 Thurs., Apr. 13      **Guest Lecture: Lisa Kochinski**  
                                   “Divine Deliverance: Bodhisattvas in Japanese Tales”
- 27 Tues., Apr. 18      Lecture: “Heian Cultural Legacies and the Analysis of Reception”
- 28 Thurs., Apr. 20      Film: *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (classroom viewing)
- 29 Tues., Apr. 25      *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*/Roundtable discussion
- 30 Thurs., Apr. 27      Conclusions & thoughts about future study

**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE via turnitin Tuesday May 9, 11:59pm PST**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards”

<https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SCampus-Part-B.pdf> . Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office* <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://dps.usc.edu>. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

**SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 / Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](https://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus

infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*  
[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu) Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*  
[ombuds.usc.edu](https://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds, who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

### **Honors in Comparative Literature**

Are you a major in Comparative Literature who enjoys independent research and working closely with faculty? If so, you should consider honors in Comparative Literature. As an honors student, you will have the opportunity to develop a thesis project related to your research interests, in collaboration with a faculty advisor. Each student who successfully completes the project receives the designation “B.A. in Comparative Literature with Honors” on their transcript. For more information about program requirements, please see our webpage:

<https://dornsife.usc.edu/colt/honors/>

Please contact Natania Meeker ([nmeeker@usc.edu](mailto:nmeeker@usc.edu)) for more information.