

Japan, Nature, and the Environment

Course Description

This course uses authentic Japanese-language materials organized around a theme in order to expand students' vocabulary, cultural literacy, and competency in written and spoken Japanese. Students will develop knowledge and fluency in the thematic area in addition to building self-study habits for continuing toward broader proficiency in Japanese. Class discussions will be conducted in a mix of Japanese and English appropriate to the level of the students in the course.

The theme for this iteration of the course is climate, nature, and the environment in Japanese culture. Japan's literature and popular culture are deeply concerned with the relationship between humans and their natural and built environments. Through an examination of literary texts, comics, films, games, and other materials, we will explore issues related to the environment, including climate change, sustainability, contamination, the urban/rural divide, disaster, and environmental inequality.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- recognize and use Japanese vocabulary and speech patterns for discussing social problems, especially climate change and the environment
- comprehend short texts and audiovisual materials
- state and support an opinion in Japanese in a presentational setting
- discuss social and cultural aspects of Japan's relationship to the environment in English

Course Requirements and Grading:

1. Participation and Preparation 25%

Regular attendance and active participation in class are vital to success in the course. Participation takes the form of contributing to in-class discussions, reading or viewing assigned materials before class, and completing written homework assignments on Canvas.

2. Vocabulary Quizzes 20%

Vocabulary quizzes will be administered twice per unit (see schedule), with words drawn from assigned materials. The lowest quiz score will be dropped from the final grade calculation.

3. Unit Tests 30%

There will be three exams (see schedule). Each test will consist of vocabulary, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and essay components.

4. *Presentations* 25%

In addition to three mini presentations making use of key expressions covered in the course (see schedule), each student will prepare a final presentation related to the topic of the course. Presentations will be approximately 7–10 minutes in length and include a visual aide. No academic research is required, but presentations should discuss information or cultural material outside those covered in class. Further details and guidance, as well as in-class time for project work, will be provided throughout the semester.

Sample Course Materials:

- ドキュメンタリー：SDGs
- ニュース：サクラの開花と地球温暖化
- 映画：崖の上のポニョ
- ニュース：捕鯨って何が問題なの？
- 漫画：銀の匙
- 小説：馬たちよ、それでも光は無垢で
- 映画：AKIRA
- ゲーム：ファイナルファンタジーVII