ART 381: Later Art of Japan – The Rise of Japanese Modernity
Instructor: Prof. John Szostak       Credit hours: 3       Contact hours: 45

Course Description: This course explores the art of Japan’s later periods (late 16th century through the present day) with special emphasis on early modern, modern, and contemporary art and visual culture. The course structure combines reading- and lecture-based learning, group research projects, and field trips to museum and significant sites. Based as the course will be in the Kansai region, we will take advantage of the art collections housed in the museums of Kobe, Osaka, and Kyoto. The art of Edo/Tokyo will also receive close study, with an overnight field trip planned to allow students to experience the Kanto region’s art offerings. Students will be asked to analyze artworks in relation to their historic context in early-modern and modern Japan, and in doing so, they will become aware of the diversity of visual forms global modernism may take, some of which will be very different and even contradictory to expectations, highlighting the non-topicality of Western cultural values and biases with regard to what makes a culture “modern.” Student who successfully apply themselves in the course will gain knowledge of the modes of Japanese art and visual cultural, both “high” and “low,” that emerged during Japan’s Edo period and continued to develop and evolve through to the present day.

The course begins with the Momoyama period (1568-1600), and the rise of the merchant-class culture in response to the stability gained with the reunification of Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate. This is also a period of significant exchange between Westerners and Japanese, the results of which will be the focus of the first field trip to the Kobe City Museum, famous for its important collection of “Nanban art.” The second part of the course will focus on the Edo period (1603-1868), which give birth to many influential, popular art styles, such as Rinpa painting and Ukiyo-e woodblock prints, so closely identified with Japan today. A close study of these will be made in the classroom, as well as at the Kyoto National Museum during our second excursion, and at the Tokyo
National Museum, Idemitsu Museum, and the Edo-Tokyo Museum, as part of an overnight excursion. The third course section focuses on Japan’s modernization during the Meiji (1868-1912), Taisho (1912-1925), and early Showa (1926-1989) eras, including the introduction of modern Western styles and priorities of art and architecture, conservative reactions against the same, and the emergence of new modes of neotraditional art. The course ends with a consideration of Japanese art since the Pacific War, with special consideration of the influence of pop culture, including manga and anime.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** This course is designed to meet the designated student learning outcomes associated with the Study Abroad Center, some of which will be achieved through students’ mastery of the subject material under study through direct encounters in the field, and some through the interactive and productive responses to this material through course assignments. In particular, by taking advantage of the smaller class size, students will be allowed to do more group work than is usually possible. In addition to instructor’s lectures, learning segments will include debate sessions that will require students to develop a discussion agenda on an assigned topic. This gives them a chance to demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues relevant to the course with appreciation for disparate viewpoints, allowing for a deeper degree of personal engagement with the material under study, which usually translates into increased expertise in the course material. Furthermore, students will be required to collaborate on group presentations, and as part of the essay-writing process, students’ writing will undergo critiques by their own peers. Through this method, students will experience the challenged and rewards of successful collaboration, and be given the chance to demonstrate their capacity to communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups.

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course, although background in the form of previous coursework in art history (especially that of Japan or China), or in early modern or modern Japanese history or literature will be helpful. All lectures, discussion, and assignments will be in English.
Texts and Materials
The course text is Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art* (2004), which will be supplemented by a selection of readings available on the UHM Laulima website. Since the readings intended as lecture preparation, students are expected to have completed reading assignments before the lecture for which they are assigned.

Coursework and Grade Assessment: Final grades will be calculated according to the following distribution scheme:

Class participation (10%): Class meetings will be a combination of lecture, discussion, learning activities, and group presentations. Attendance to all class meetings, including field trips, is required.

Weekly quizzes (20%): Weekly quizzes will be given in order to emphasize core concepts and reinforce the need to keep up with reading assignments.

Field trip journals (30%): The field trip journal can be in the form of a notebook, a scrapbook, or an internet blog. Guidelines will be supplied in the first week of class. The journal is the students’ way of sharing reactions and reflections with the instructor and with each other (if desired), and should reflect each student’s individual experience of the various museums and the art works we view there. While creativity is encouraged, grades will primarily reflect the quality of the thoughts and ideas expressed in the journals.

Writing assignments (20%): Students will produce two short essays, the first to be a comparative study of two Edo-period artworks examined during one of our field trips. The second will focus on a single artist studied in the course, and feature a close study of a single artwork produced by him or her. Both papers will undergo a critique by peers. Illustrations in the form of photos (or sketches if preferred, or where photos are not permitted) to be created by the students during the field trips. Guidelines for writing assignments will be available the first week of class.

Final presentation (20%): Students will select one of the two essays produced for the course and expand it to create a 15-minute presentation. As part of the process of revising their essays, students will pair up in order to benefit from peer review and critique as they plan their presentations, and to offer feedback during presentation practice. Guidelines for presentations will be available the first week of class.
Overview of Study Topics and Schedule: The following is a projection of the reading and lecture topics planned for the course, as well as the projected field trip itineraries.

1. Jan. xx: Intro to Course
   
   **Topics:** Overview of change from “premodern” to “early modern Japan,” including the closing of the country to formal outside contact, the rise of middle-class townspeople (chonin) culture, and its relation to the burgeoning of several new popular art movements over the course of the Edo period.
   

   
   **Topics:** Japan’s first direct encounters with Western or Nanban culture and religion, the resulting rupture of paradigms in the visual arts, and the explosion of new styles and approaches to art-making. This period also saw the rise of Japanese tea culture, which will also receive an introduction.
   

3. Jan. xx: Field Trip #1 to Kobe City Museum
   
   **Goal:** to view the museum’s extensive collection of Nanban art, including many works studied in week 2.
   

4. Jan. xx: Samurai Culture of the Edo Period
   
   **Topics:** the political rise of the samurai class in the 17th c. Study of the arms, armor, and castle architecture associated with the ruling samurai class, as well as the kinds of popular culture samurai supported and stimulated. Preparation for field trip in week 7.
   

5. Feb. xx: Edo Period Schools of Painting
   
   **Topics:** The Edo period saw the emergence of many important new styles of painting catering to both the ruling samurai class and economically powerful merchant class. This week we will see how these two social spheres overlapped in the field of painting. Due to our location in Kansai, lectures will cover the introduction and important developments in
Kansai-based practitioners of the Kano, Rinpa, Maruyama-Shijo schools of painting.


6. Feb. xx: Special focus: Tawaraya Sotatsu and Kano Sanraku

Topics: This week we will approach Japanese painting from another angle, by moving into the forest and studying two of its trees. Tawaraya Sotatsu, one of the founders of Rinpa movement, and Kano Sanraku, one of the last Kano painters to work out of Kyoto. This week’s study is intended to lay the groundwork for our field trip to Kyoto in week 7.


7. Feb. xx: Field Trip #2 to Kyoto: Kyoto National Museum, Nijo Castle

Goal: to view examples of paintings by Sotatsu at the KNM, and paintings created for installation at Nijo castle by Sanraku. Visiting the latter will also cap off our study of Edo-era samurai culture by studying in situ architecture designed for the ruling class.


Topics: The Edo period is perhaps most famous for two cultural phenomena – courtesans and woodblock prints. This week focuses on ukiyo-e, or “pictures of the floating world,” print art that illustrated and was inspired by the world of night entertainments, including illicit erotic prints.


Topics: Continuing the discussion of Japanese woodblock prints, we examine how print artists were inspired by popular literature or yomihon and kabuki theater to create subgenre of print art. The rise of landscape prints, and such artists as Hokusai and Hiroshige, are also discussed, as well as how these prints helped spread the image of a culturally distinct and unified Japan in the later Edo period.

10. Mar. xx: Transition – From Edo to Modern Japan
*Topics: Covers the last decades of the Edo period and beginnings of the Meiji era and modern Japan. Includes discussion of the opening of the country to foreign trade, the second wave of importation of Western art-making technologies, including oil painting and photography, and Western architectural practices and styles.*


11. Mar. xx: The Rise of Neotraditional Art (1900s-30s)
*Topics: In the first decades of the 20th century, Japan saw a pushback against the perceived loss of traditions, and by extension, rise of Western cultural hegemony through the government’s vibrant policy of rapid modernization. 1900-1930 saw the development of “neo-traditional” art forms that, while not entirely rejecting Western models of artistic modernism, emphasized the exploration and expression of an indigenous “Japaneseness.” This includes such new concepts as Nihonga or “Japanese painting,” and Sosaku Hanga, or “creative prints” intended to update and reinvigorate the Ukiyo-e tradition, and the concept of Mingei or Japanese “folk art,” a modern, anti-industrialist movement that took inspiration from local pottery traditions of the Edo period and earlier.*


12. Mar. xx: Art and the Pacific War (1930s-40s)
*Topics: Artists’ role in Japan’s build-up to and execution of expansionist war in the Pacific. Includes a discussion of propaganda art, as well as the efforts of some artists who resisted pressure to produce artworks with nationalistic or propagandistic messages.*


**Topics:** Covers the difficult years of recovery after the Pacific War, and the third wave of importation of new forms of and ideas about art, especially avant-garde art. Japanese avant-garde did not, however, simply mimic what was happening in the Americas and Europe. Lectures and readings emphasize the efforts of Kansai-area artists and avant-garde collectives, especially the important group Gutai, which was based in Ashiya, near Kobe.

14. Apr. xx: Field trip #3 to Kobe: Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art

**Goal:** This museum has one of the best collections of artworks related to avant-garde Japanese art of the 1950s and 60s, especially works created for Gutai exhibitions in the mid-late 50s.


15. Apr. xx: New Directions (1970s, 80s, 90s)

**Topics:** We consider the realignment and diversification of contemporary Japanese art, especially the rising influence of popular culture in the form of anime and manga, which has proved to be equally powerful and inspirational globally. Special focus on artist Murakami Takashi and his theory of Japanese culture as “superflat.”

**READ:** Mason, 384-391; Midori Matsui, "Beyond the Pleasure Room to a Chaotic Street: Transformations of Cute Subculture in the Art of the Japanese Nineties," in *Little Boy* (New York: Japan Society, 2005), 208-239.

16. Apr. xx: Japanese Art Now (2000s, 10s)

**Topics:** Whither contemporary Japanese art? A discussion of the most recent trends, from new forms of installation and performance art that uses the newest forms of digital technology, to a recent revivalist movement that has artists looking to Japan’s premodern periods and artistic traditions for inspiration.


17. May. xx: Field Trip #4 to Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum (day 1), Edo-Tokyo Museum, Idemitsu Museum (day 2), National Museum of Modern Art, Mori Art Museum (day 3)

**Goal:** A 3-day field trip intended to recap the course, with visits to the TNM and two museums known for their collections of Edo-period art on days 1 and 2, and on day 3, to two
museums, one government-run, the other private, which between them have done more to identify and promote rising Japanese artists and trends than any other institutions in Japan.


18. May xx: Students’ final presentations