

The Modern Japanese Short Story
Autumn 2025

Instructor: Michael E. Jamentz
Location: M3
Time: Tues & Thurs, 5th Period

Course Description

This Japanese Literature course is devoted to the modern Japanese short story. The aim of the class is to help students become familiar with a wide range of works written during a period spanning more than a century, from the late Meiji to the present Reiwa era. Students will generally be asked to read two short works each week. The author of each story has been considered a master of the short story genre, known as *tanpen shōsetsu* in Japanese. All the stories are considered classics and should provide students with an unrivaled overview of Japanese literature and culture.

In addition to reading the text, students will be required to listen to brief introductory lectures, keep a notebook recording both an analysis of concrete aspects of each story and their personal response to it, and also to prepare for participation in class discussions based on students' reactions to the readings.

Discussions of the readings are central to the smooth functioning of the class and a critical element of each student's grade. It is thus very important that students keep up with the readings. The final weeks of the class will be devoted to brief student presentations on a new reading selected by each student and an in-class exam, in which students must write a short essay comparing two works encountered during the semester.

Textbook: Goossen, Theodore W. *The Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories*. Oxford University Press, 2002 (or a later edition).

Method of Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the basis of classroom participation including regular small group and class-wide discussions (40%), a brief final presentation on a reading of the student's choice (10%), the quality of a notebook containing responses to the readings (40%), and a final in-class exam (10%).

Tentative Schedule of Readings: (The following schedule may be altered to suit student needs or supplemented with student suggestions.)

Week 1: Introduction to the Course and the Japanese Short Story
Tues. Sept. 9: On Translating Japanese Literature, Atkins "A Swisp of Snipes"
Thurs. Sept. 11: Judging Translations, The Two Dancing Girls of Izu

Week 2:
Tues. Sept. 16: Natsume Sōseki, "The Third Night," pp. 28-30.

- Thurs. Sept. 18: Kunikida Doppo, "The Bonfire," pp. 31-35.
- Week 3:
- Tues. Sept. 23: Mori Ōgai, "Sansho the Steward," (Film adaption), pp. 1-27.
- Thurs. Sept. 25: Higuchi Ichiyō, "Separate Ways," pp. 36-44.
- Week 4:
- Tues. Sept. 30: Nagai Kafū, "The Peony Garden," pp. 45-51.
- Thurs. Oct 2: Fall Field Trip
- Week 5:
- Tues. Oct. 7: Shiga Naoya, "Night Fires," pp. 52-61.
- Thurs. Oct. 9: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "Aguri," pp. 62-73.
- Week 6:
- Tues. Oct. 14: Satomi Ton, "Blowfish," pp. 74-78.
- Thurs. Oct. 16: Okamoto Kanoko, "Portrait of an Old Geisha," pp. 79-94.
- Week 7:
- Tues. Oct. 21: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "In a Grove" (Film adaption *Rashōmon*) pp. 95-102.
- Thurs. Oct. 23: Miyazawa Kenji: "The Bears of Nametoko," pp. 103-111.
- Week 8:
- Tues. Oct. 28: Yokomitsu Riichi: "Spring Riding in a Carriage," p. 112-23.
- Thurs. Oct. 30: Ibuse Masuji: "Carp," pp. 124-8.
- Week 9: November 3-7, Fall Break
- Week 10:
- Tues. Nov. 11: Mukōda Kuniko: "Mr. Carp," pp. 334-43.
- Tues. Nov. 13: Kajii Motojirō: "Lemon," pp. 149-53.
- Week 11:
- Tues. Nov. 18: Kawabata Yasunari: "The Izu Dancer," pp. 129-148.
- Thurs. Nov. 20: Sakaguchi Ango: "In the Forest, Under Cherries in Full Bloom," pp. 187-205.
- Week 12:
- Tues. Nov. 25: Dazai Osamu, "Merry Christmas," pp. 224-231.
- Thurs. Nov. 27: (Monday Class Day)
- Week 13:
- Tues. Dec. 2: Murakami Haruki, "The Elephant Vanishes," ppp. 400-416.
- Thurs. Dec. 4: Yoshimoto Banana, "Dreaming of Kimchee," pp. 432-443.
- Week 14:
- Tues. Dec. 9: Student Presentations
- Thurs. Dec. 11: In-class Final Written Exam