

REL 332: Encountering Japanese Religions

Julymester 2023

QUICK INFO

This 30-day Julymester course is based in Tokyo, Japan and includes excursions around the city as well as to Japan's most famous Zen monastery (Eiheiji) and the ancient capital of Kyoto. Classes are held at Komazawa University, a major Japanese university and leader in Soto Zen research and education. There will be opportunities to interact with Komazawa students. Accommodations in Tokyo are at the Tokyo Grand Hotel, a 3-star hotel within walking distance of the Imperial Palace, Tokyo Tower, and the Roppongi and Ginza shopping districts. Accommodations during trips outside of Tokyo will be in hotels.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces Japanese Zen Buddhism; its history, practice, and influence on culture, and society—as well one's sense of self and other. The verb “encounter” in the course title indicates an emphasis on active learning, which first and foremost is realized by residing in Japan for the full four-week course period. Students will be taught to identify the infusion of Zen, and Buddhism in general, within Japanese everyday life, including interpersonal relationships. They will also read classic Buddhist texts and contemporary interpretations of them, visit Zen temples and sites, and listen to guest lectures by Japanese priests and professors, all the while being based at Komazawa University, Japan's main Soto Zen university.

The course provides organized opportunities to interact with Komazawa students, including an overnight trip where Komazawa and USC students will engage in cultural and religious comparison. The final way in which Zen is encountered in this course is through regular sittings of zazen meditation, including instruction by Zen teachers and an overnight zazen retreat. By combining study, touring, interpersonal interaction, and meditation practice, this course creates a holistic encounter with Japanese Zen that offers not just knowledge about religion as well as foreign people, culture, and places; but also lifelong meditation skills that can help students focus while calming their minds and bodies.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course introduces students to new ways of understanding, analyzing, and evaluating human thought, activity, and the meanings given to existence. It does this through various academic disciplines, including history, religion, and literature; but also through exploring a foreign country and culture. The final means to a new understanding introduced is zazen meditation, which by sitting still and engaging in “non-thinking” offers a different way to be in our minds and bodies. There are four learning objectives:

1. To learn about Zen and Japan in order to think differently about one's own country, culture, and religious grounding

2. To explore Japan and appreciate Japanese people in order to think differently about oneself and people with whom we identify
3. To experience new states of being through zazen meditation in order to re-evaluate one's entrenched patterns of thought and behavior
4. To express thoughts and formulate arguments through good, clear writing

Having successfully met the learning objectives, you will have acquired both practical skills and more intangible competencies. You will master strategies for finding, reading and understanding relevant information from different genres, for analyzing complex problems, for making and evaluating compelling arguments, and for preparing effective presentations. You will become a clearer thinker and a stronger writer. You will know how to situate current events and ideas in the right historical and cultural context to be able to make better decisions. You will gain new insights and be inspired. You will be ready for a life of learning and creativity

INSTRUCTOR

Lon Kurashige (Professor, Dornsife, Van Hunnick History Department). Pronouns (*he, him, his*). Contact: kurashig@usc.edu

REQUIRED READINGS

- Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind: Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice* (Boulder: Shambala, 2011)
- Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being* [Novel] (New York: Penguin, 2013)
- Various readings by Eihei Dogen, D.T. Suzuki, Philip Kapleau, and others to be downloaded from course Blackboard (see schedule)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Daily Reflection x 12:** These are short (500 word) reflections on a student's activities and thoughts relevant to course themes. Three are required per each week of class. The reflections will be used to assess student understanding of course readings, guest speakers, trips, and events.
- **Blog Post x 2:** Each student will post two of their daily reflections, with added photos/videos, to the course blog.
- **Research Project:** Research relevant to course themes conducted while in Japan. The project can be in the form of an essay (2500 words), video (10-20 minutes), or another type of expression (such as memoir or creative writing) approved by the instructor.
- **Class Participation:** Students are required to participate actively in all class meetings, events, and trips.

GRADING BREAKDOWN AND SCORING

Class Participation	30%
Daily Reflection x 12	30%

Research Project	30%
Blog Posts x 3	10%

Student work is scored as follows:

97-100 A+	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	Below 60 F
93-96 A	83-86 B	73-76 C	63-66 D	
90-92 A-	80-82 B-	70-72 C-	60-62 D-	

Final course grades are based on the same scale, except the USC allows no A+ course grades; students receiving 97-100 will receive an A.

There are NO planned extra credit opportunities.

TECHNOLOGY

Be sure to bring a laptop, tablet or another internet enabled device to class meetings. You will need to access the internet for class activities.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

All students must conform to USC's health and safety protocols for overseas travel as well as all health and safety policies existing in Japan during our time of travel. This includes COVID vaccination and testing requirements. Explicit information about USC's and Japan's health and safety protocols will be discussed and handout at the start of class.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

USC requires the following documents to be signed by all students in this course:

- Know Before You Go Informed Consent Form
- Medical Treatment Authorization
- Student Travel Abroad Release
- USC-Sponsored Student Travel Health Insurance Packet

CLASSROOM GROUND RULES

An intellectually vibrant classroom requires creating a safe space in which everyone feels comfortable asking questions and sharing ideas. To create such a space, students are asked to follow these ground rules.

- ✓ Treat others as you like to be treated—with respect and consideration for their feelings. We need to allow each other to make honest mistakes in the name of intellectual curiosity and pushing boundaries of thought. And we also need to be sensitive to other points of view and not to make the same mistakes over and over again.

- ✓ Privacy: Everything done for class is for class purposes only. Unless authorized by the instructor, there will be no sharing of posts, contact information, images, class materials, or anything else involving the class.
- ✓ Be on-time to class and all course events and trips; and don't leave until class ends. Be considerate of fellow students and instructor by paying attention to the instruction and not disturbing the class.

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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

REL 332 Course Schedule

Day	Date	Activity	Assignment	Guest Speaker/Topic
Thu	13-Jul	Leave for Japan Arrive at Tokyo Grand Hotel: 2-5-2 Shiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 105-0014, TEL: +81-3-		
Fri	14-Jul	3456-2222 Leave for Retreat at Inter-University		
Sat	15-Jul	Seminar House, Hachioji		
Sun	16-Jul	Return back to Tokyo from Retreat Class Meeting (Komazawa Univ., Fukusawa Campus): 1-2:30pm; Campus Tour; Zen	Suzuki: 1-19; Ozeki: 2- 195	
Mon	17-Jul	Museum		
Tue	18-Jul	***Free Day***	***	
Wed	19-Jul	Class Meeting (Komazawa Univ., Fukusawa Campus): 10:30-12pm; 1-2:30pm	Suzuki: 20-39; Ozeki: 196-258	
Thu	20-Jul	***Free Day***	***	
Fri	21-Jul	Class Meeting (Komazawa Univ., Fukusawa Campus): 10:30-12pm; 1-2:30pm; Student Workshop	Suzuki: 63-84; Ozeki: 259-341	
Sat	22-Jul	***Free Day***		
Sun	23-Jul	***Free Day***		
Mon	24-Jul	Class Meeting (Komazawa Univ., Fukusawa Campus): 10:30-12pm; 1-2:30pm	Suzuki: 85-106; Ozeki: 342-408	
Tue	25-Jul	***Free Day***	***	
Wed	26-Jul	Class Meeting (Komazawa Univ., Fukusawa Campus): 10:30-12pm; 1-2:30pm	Dogen: ;Nonomura: 11-66	
Thu	27-Jul	***Free Day***		
Fri	28-Jul	Shogakuji Temple Visit		
Sat	29-Jul	***Free Day***	***	
Sun	30-Jul	***Free Day***	***	
Mon	31-Jul	Zen Site Visit (Eiheiji)		
Tue	1-Aug	Zen Site Visit (Kyoto)	Yamada, "Are Rock Gardens Really Pretty?"	
Wed	2-Aug	Zen Site Visit (Kyoto)		
Thu	3-Aug	Zen Site Visit (Kyoto)		
Fri	4-Aug	Leave Kyoto; Zazen Retreat in Saitama	Shobogenzo chapter	
Sat	5-Aug	Zazen Retreat	Shobogenzo chapters	
Sun	6-Aug	Zazen Retreat; Return to Tokyo		
Mon	7-Aug	Research Paper Meetings		
Tue	8-Aug	***Free Day***	***	
Wed	9-Aug	Research Activity		
Thu	10-Aug	***Free Day***	***	

	11-		
Fri	Aug	Research Activity	
	12-		
Sat	Aug	***Free Day***	***
	13-		
Sun	Aug	Leave Tokyo; Arrive in US	***
	31-		
Thu	Aug	Research Paper Due	