

## Love and Loss in Japanese Literary Traditions

Class meets T R 10:15-11:44  
 Location TBA  
 8-6334, [ljchance@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:ljchance@sas.upenn.edu)

Linda Chance, East Asian Languages and Civilizations  
 Williams 852 Drop-in Hours: T 2-3, R 1-2  
 Or we can meet by appointment

Writing Advisor: TBA

Though I go to him constantly  
 on the paths of dream,  
 never resting my feet,  
 in the real world  
 it doesn't equal a single glance.



**CONTENT:** How do people make sense of the multiple experiences that the simple words "love" and "loss" imply? How do they express thoughts and feelings to one another? What ways do the genders that authors have, assume, or write about affect those expressions? In this course, we will explore some means Japanese culture has found to grapple with these events and sensations. We will also see how culturally sanctioned frameworks have shaped the ways Japanese view love and loss, not only as personal issues, but in social and political contexts as well. Our materials will sample the literary traditions of Japan from earliest times to the early modern period, plus post-World War II re-imaginings. Close readings of a diverse group of texts, many by women authors, including poetry, narrative, theater, and the related arts of calligraphy, painting, and music, will structure our inquiry. By the end, you should be able to appreciate texts that differ significantly in their value systems, linguistic expressions, and aesthetic sensibilities from those you may already know. All shared class material is in English translation.

**LEVEL:** Introductory course, no prerequisites. We assume no prior knowledge about Japan (or China or Korea), but try to give new perspectives to those who have previous exposure.

**REQUIREMENTS FULFILLED:** Sector III: Arts and Letters  
 Cross-Cultural Analysis Foundational Approach  
 Interdisciplinary Minor in Global Medieval Studies  
 Major/Minor in EALC, EAST  
 Can serve as EALC capstone course with permission

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Available at the Penn Bookstore or On Reserve (which is to say we will make links available for those who do not want to buy the books):

MacMillan, Peter. *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each: A Treasury of Classical Japanese Verse*. Penguin, must be the 2018 edition.

Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Translated by Royall Tyler. Penguin Classics abridged edition, 2006.

Kenkō and Chōmei. *Essays in Idleness and Hōjōki*. Translated by Meredith McKinney. Penguin Classics, 2013.

The books cost less than \$50 new all together. You might be able to find used copies at House of Our Own (3920 Spruce Street) or The Last Word (40<sup>th</sup> Street).

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**Group Work:** Some in-class work and assignments will be done with **your community** (groups of three that we set up by the third week). You will be able to choose your own methods and times to work together, but please do not just divide the work up and complete the parts separately. Consider the practical benefits of experiencing different attitudes and approaches, and working respectfully with others. One goal is to develop a group of trusted readers who can help each other by reading drafts of assignments.

**Statement on Inclusion:** This class features a considerable amount of group work. Sometimes people tell me that they are tired of group work and wish they could avoid the hassle. But knowledge does not arise in a vacuum. Getting to know others is a great way to get to know yourself. Working collaboratively is also a key element of the tradition that we will be studying. Japanese poets composed together all the time.

This tradition was, however, only accessible to the elite for centuries. We will not model ourselves on that aspect of Japanese literature. Everyone who comes to this class brings unique talents and experiences, which you should expect to share with others, but not at the expense of others. Be prepared to treat your classmates with respect and tolerance. Be ready to ask for any accommodations that you need. Remember that what you need in order to fully participate in the course is not “special”—you deserve it.

In reading literature, we are seeking the voices of writers from the past. It is important to me that each of you finds your own voice as well. I encourage you to think about what you already do well. Maybe you are great at writing papers, or maybe you find discussion easy. By all means practice these things. But ask yourself what you don't think of as your niche and try your voice there as well. Every year I discover art and poetry in this class from people who feel sure they have no talent in those areas. *Prepare to be amazed.*

**CNVS:** Some readings will be on the Canvas website to read online or download.

**RESOURCES:**

The class website will be found at <https://canvas.upenn.edu>. Separate handouts posted to the website over the course of the semester will explain such issues as the importance of citation, the how-tos of literary analysis, expectations and hints for the paper, and so on.

If you need something, or find something that you think others might need or enjoy, please let me know and I will add content to the website.

**GOALS, ASSIGNMENTS, & ASSESSMENTS:** **NB:** *You must complete the final paper to get a grade in the course.* You will have options for when and how to do most other assignments.

For each • category below, you will see three things: what you need to do in this course (the objective), how we propose you achieve it (the assignments), and how we will assess your achievement. A quarter of the assignments are ungraded—if you do them on time, you get the credit.

- You need to develop critical awareness when reading texts.

You will do this by writing **Explorations** (short responses to prompts) during eight weeks over the course of the semester. See details below. 25%, ungraded

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- You need to expand your expressive capacities.  
You will do this through various kinds of writing (Exploration prompts) and by choosing at least one Exploration that is not a standard expository essay.
- You need to expand your sense of what critical awareness can be and communicate it well.  
You will do this by writing a response to two **Wild Cards** by other communities. The response is due within one week of the presentation. 5%  
  
Your community will also serve as a **Discussion/Activity Monitor** on one occasion, then summarize what you think was gained in the discussion or group activity. 5%
- You need to develop cultural appreciation.  
For this we do something I call a **Wild Card**: Once during the semester, you and your community members will sign up to present one cultural item related to Japanese literature that we might otherwise miss. See details below. 5%
- You need to become familiar with the disciplines of literary and cultural studies.  
You will do this by preparing a **Critical Reading**. See below. 5%  
  
Four brief **quizzes** will also allow you to organize and exercise your knowledge of the field. 10%
- You need to find your voice.  
You will do this through **class participation**. 20%
- You need to develop interpretive sophistication.  
You will do this by writing a **paper**. You will work through the steps in developing it with your community members. 5% for steps (ungraded), 20% the paper itself

You need to make progress in all seven objectives in order to earn a grade of A in the course.

Historically, students earned an A- when they did very well overall but did not revise the paper or almost never spoke in class.

### DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS

**Explorations: What?** Over the course of the semester, you must submit written “explorations” of selected themes or works *any eight times* (you choose which; see below).

Length is flexible, but you will probably write between a long paragraph and a page each time (250-350 words; may be single-spaced, but please use paragraph indents).

Look at the exploration prompts each time, even when you don’t write, as discussions will often jump off from these points.

**NB:** *You must be present in class to submit an exploration*—explorations are not substitutes for attendance.

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**When?** Questions for exploratory writing concerning material to be covered in class the following week will be posted to the Canvas website by Friday each week.

In general there will be a question for each session (about 25 choices), but *you may only write on one question per work of literature for credit* (e.g. only one Exploration on *The Tale of Genji*).

The exploration needs to be submitted *by midnight the night before class*.

Explorations will not be accepted after the class discussion has taken place.

You are of course welcome to write explorations more often than the required minimum eight times.

**Why?** Explorations *will not be assigned grades* as such--if you do the eight in a timely fashion you will get full credit for them. They are designed as a way to get you thinking about the material and expressing yourself through writing on a regular basis. Each one will be given a check, check plus, or check minus to give you a sense of how your writing communicates.

**How?** Explorations should be typed (except when they are in visual or other forms), and you should go over them to make sure they make sense and are without avoidable errors (pay attention to your spell-checker, in other words). If there is a persistent technical issue in your writing, one of the team will give you advice on how to deal with it.

**Wild Card Process:**

1. Choose anything that the group would like to share with the class (a favorite poem, a piece of material culture, a web resource, a recommended theory, etc.). You could also go together (virtually, depending) and tell us about a performance or lecture outside of class. This is your time to think about how the Japanese literary tradition links up with your other knowledge and interests, and to develop your arts of persuasion within your community as you decide what to choose.
2. Sign up on Canvas for a date to present it to the class.
3. Write a brief (50 word) proposal telling why you think people will be interested in the context of our studies and submit it for approval and confirmation of your date (**at least one week ahead**).
4. Prepare a draft (powerpoint, script, etc.) for my comments and check of the contents (**at least 48 hours ahead**).
5. Prepare a presentation (video, powerpoint, whatever you like), not longer than five minutes.
6. Present and get everyone excited about your Wild Card.

**Discussion/Activity Monitor:** You will choose a date on which to help me monitor class discussion or activity. You may choose to do this together with your Community, or each person may contribute independently. There will be a sign-up on Canvas.

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**Critical Reading:** Sign up to read one critical reading (e.g. the introduction of a book, or a roughly five-page segment of a journal article that I have chosen) and provide the following: 1) a one-sentence summary of the argument; 2) one thing that surprised you; 3) in your judgment, is the author writing with the field of study around this topic, or against it?; 4) write a short paragraph expressing your thoughts on the subject in which you cite or quote the author's work.

**Quizzes:** Four brief quizzes of 25 points each will be given, each at the beginning of the hour. Since there are no other exams, you must take all four quizzes. Question formats will include identification, short answer, matching, and so forth (see the sample on Canvas). Handouts on Canvas will list all names and terms for which you will be responsible.

**Class Preparation, Attendance, and Participation:** In order to participate, you must attend class (within the limitations of Covid safety). In practice, ten percent of your course grade will be based on attendance.

Your participation will be recorded. Participation means both active contribution in discussions and active listening to your classmates. Participation in group activities will also count. Meaningful participation depends on good preparation, so preparation is also part of this grade.

No absence will be excused without an appropriate reason and prior arrangement with the instructor. Please use Course Action Notices (the CAN system) to let me know if you must miss class.

**Paper Writing Assignment:** There is one formal writing assignment. You must choose a work or works of literature in consultation with the instructor. You will conduct an analysis of a work of literature, *without reference to secondary sources*. You may bring in historical, social or other kinds of background, but only common knowledge--scholar X's critical or interpretive viewpoints are not needed. The focus of this paper is your (informed) response to the work, which may range from a long narrative to a few poems.

The paper should be about 1750 words (5 pages), not counting quotations from the work of literature. The primary goal of the assignment is not to get the correct number of pages, however. If your paper is "too short," don't pad it; if it is "too long," edit mercilessly. In fact, plan to edit mercilessly anyway. Exchange drafts with your community members.

**CAUTIONS:**

**Observe deadlines**--late papers (except in cases of documented illness or emergency) will be graded down one step per day (A becomes A-, etc.). *Late explorations will not be accepted.*

**One Free Pass Policy:** Things happen. Each person is entitled to one free pass, no explanation needed, on something outside your community work. For example, you submit an Exploration in advance but get sick on the day and can't be in class. Use your free pass to have your Exploration accepted. Or you will be late with your paper draft because of a conference. Use your free pass and propose a deadline you can make. You come to class completely unprepared. Use your free pass to stay on the sidelines. (You do not need to use your pass for an excused absence.)

**Problem** with a grade? Appeals of any kind should be submitted in writing.

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**Electronic Device Distraction Policy:** You may use a laptop or tablet to take notes, but non-course related activities (news, social media, shopping, games) are not permitted. Please silence your phones and put them out of sight during class. In cases of emergency, tell me at the start of class that you must have your phone out.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** In North American academic culture, you must follow standards of academic behavior. Cheating or plagiarizing in any form, if intentional, must be reported. The problematic assignment or quiz will be given a grade of zero. Citation of sources in papers must be consistent in format, and must be used every time you borrow the words or ideas of another author. This includes sources on the Web.

**Generative AI Use Policy:** AI (ChatGPT, for example) does a really bad job with Japanese literature. Beyond the usual limitations of generative AI, such as the tendency to fabricate information or create offensive content, there is not enough accurate training data (never mind the question of whether it can be ethically shared in this way) to produce even marginal results in this field. As a practical matter alone, you would be crazy to try doing your assignments with AI. As a philosophical matter, you would be shortchanging yourself most of all. You are here to learn how to read and to think, and writing is a powerful tool for thinking. This course is not about products (a “better” paper, a glitzier presentation, etc.). Your paper and other assignments have meaning only as processes of developing habits of attention and expression. Unless you can show us that AI helps us think in some meaningful sense, you may not use it for your work in this class.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:**

Some lectures and performances will take place (some virtually) at Penn and the surrounding area this semester. You may want to attend with your community group and report briefly to the class as your “wild card,” or just go for the fun of it.

Some of you may wish to go to Shōfūsō Japanese House and Garden in Fairmount Park to experience Japanese traditional living. (The House will close in November for the winter.) With student ID, \$9 admission. [japanphilly.org/shofuso/](http://japanphilly.org/shofuso/)

CLASS SESSION AND READING SCHEDULESPECIAL ITEMS

*Note: All reading must be done **prior** to the class session for which it is scheduled.*

Remember that written work can always be turned in early without penalty.

**A. Poetry, Beauty, Love, and Loss**

1. T 8/27 *Introduction, Even in my dreams . . .*
2. R 8/29 *Passion and Poetry: Uses and Misuses of Tradition*  
CNVS Sotoba Komachi (Five Modern Noh Plays of Japan),  
 pp. 2-34  
 CNVS Brantley review of Sotoba Komachi  
 CNVS Strong, on “heartless Komachi,” pp. 393-96



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3. T 9/3 *Dream of Desire: Ono no Komachi*  
CNVS Ono no Komachi, poems from *The Ink Dark Moon*, pp. 3-46; notes pp. 161 and 176-87  
CNVS Hirshfield, "The World Is Large and Full of Noises: Thoughts on Translation," pp. 54-63
4. R 9/5 *The Poet in the Mirror: Introduction to Styles and Poetics*  
CNVS selected poems from early collections  
CNVS *Kojiki*, "Lady Blooming Tree Blossoms," pp. 52-3
5. T 9/10 *Poetry Games*  
CNVS Yoshino, "Hyakunin isshu & the popularization of classical poetry," pp. 256-58  
Begin working through Teika/MacMillan, *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each*
6. R 9/12 *One Hundred Poets, One Hundred Poems*  
Teika/MacMillan, *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each*, pp. 1-119
7. T 9/17 *Field Trip to Woodlands cemetery* (depending on weather, we may shift this)
8. R 9/19 *Ink Dark Mountain, Ink Dark City*  
CNVS poems of Saigyō, his contemporaries, and atomic bomb poems

**B. Narrative: The Writing of Lives and Deaths**

9. T 9/24 *Getting Out of the House*  
CNVS *The Pillow Book*, pp. 3-12, 16-29, 178-84, 194-5, 254-56 (sections 1-5, 10-25, 183-98, 220, S26-S29)
- QUIZ A
10. R9/26 *The Perils of Polygyny*  
CNVS selections from *The Kagerō Diary*, pp. 55-89  
CNVS selection from *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*, pp. 47-59
11. T 10/1 *Tales of Genji: Unending Regret*  
*Tale of Genji*, Prologue, pp. 1-3  
*Tale of Genji*, Chapter 1, "The Paulownia Pavilion (Kiritsubo)," pp. 4-17  
CNVS Thomas, "Spirit/Medium," 157-70
- FALL BREAK
12. T 10/8 *Tales of Genji: The Quest*  
Chapter 2, "The Broom Tree (Hahakigi)," pp. 18-53; Chapter 4, "Yūgao," pp. 54-86
13. R 10/10 *Tales of Genji: Seeking and Finding*  
*Tale of Genji*, Chapter 5: "Young Murasaki (Wakamurasaki)," pp. 87-127
14. T 10/15 *Tales of Genji: Genji's Wives*  
*Tale of Genji*, Chapter 9, "Heart-to-Heart (Aoi)," pp. 162-85  
CNVS Bagen, "The Paradigmatic Form of Spirit Possession," pp. 9-13

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CNVS Field, "The Rokujō Lady: Pride and Possession," pp. 45-51  
 CNVS Shirane, "Polygamous Triangles," pp. 115-16

15. R 10/17 *Tales of the Heike: The Fall of the Arrogant*

CNVS *Tales of the Heike*, "The Jetavana Temple," 3-4, "The Rokuhara Boys," "One Man's Glory," "Giō," 12-28, "The Death of Kiyomori," "Sutra Island," "Jishinbō," 325-35, "The Death of Kiso," 463-68

## QUIZ B

16. T 10/22 *Tales of the Heike: To Drown, To Dream*

CNVS *Tales of the Drowning of* 609-17, "The Lori Meeks, Reassessing the



*Heike*, "Kozaishō Drowns," 511-17, "The Emperor Antoku," "The Death of Noritsune," Initiates' Book," 687-709  
 "Survival and Salvation in the *Heike monogatari*: Legacy of Kenreimon'in," pp. 142-65

17. R 10/24 *How Far Will They Go? Tales of the Heike in Performance*, musical presentation in class

CNVS *Tales of the Heike*, "The Death of Atsumori," 504-506, "The Old Horse," 482-85, "Bow Oars," "Katsu-ura and Ōzaka Pass," "The Death of Tsuginobu," "Nasu no Yoichi," "The Dropped Bow," 581-600

## C. Wandering Paths: Traditions Travel

18. T 10/29 *Aesthetics of Impermanence*

*Essays in Idleness*, (sections 1-136), pp. 3-115 in Keene, or pp. 21-87 in McKinney, notes, 152-72

19. R 10/31 *Which is the Way?*

*Essays in Idleness*, (sections 137-243), pp. 115-201 in Keene, or 87-140 in McKinney, notes, pp. 172-88

20. T 11/6 *Nō Theater: Enlightenment through the Senses*

CNVS *Komachi on the Stupa*



Discuss paper topic with your community by this date

21. R 11/7 *Take That! Medieval Illustrated Fiction*

CNVS "The Demon Shuten Dōji," pp. 31-59

## QUIZ C

22. T11/12 *Zen Is As Zen Does*

CNVS Hoffmann, "Death Poems by Zen Monks," pp. 91-129

Exchange paper outline with your community by this date

**D. The Floating World of Tokugawa Japan: Tradition for All**

23. R 11/14 *Matsuo Bashō in Time*  
CNVS Bashō, selections

24. T 11/19 *Reviving and Surviving the Tradition*  
CNVS, Buson, selections  
Issa, selections

26. R 11/21 *Tradition for a Fee: Ihara Saikaku*  
CNVS Ihara Saikaku, *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, ch. 1, pp. 51-84 (plus notes)

25. T 11/26 *It's Haiku to You*  
CNVS assorted poems

FIRST DRAFT literary analysis due  
THANKSGIVING BREAK

27. T 12/3 *The Puppet's Net: Love and Duty according to Chikamatsu Monzaemon*  
CNVS *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, pp. 333-63

28. R 12/5 *Reflecting Back: Where Have We Been?*

QUIZ D

Tuesday, December 17, Before noon

FINAL DRAFT of literary analysis due