



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

FACULTY OF CREATIVE AND CRITICAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND WORLD LITERATURE

(Tentative)
2026 Summer Term 1 Go Global Summer Seminar
Food and Society in Contemporary Japan
JPST395C (3 credits)

The Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies acknowledges that the land on which we are situated in the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) People.

INSTRUCTOR Mayu Takasaki
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OFFICE HOURS By appointment

Academic Calendar Entry

A range of literary and cultural topics such as film adaptations, travel writing, manga, and horror.
Prerequisite: 3rd year standing.

Course Format

- 1) Pre-departure (1st & 2nd week): Students will receive pre-departure information and guidance to familiarize themselves with the course objectives, travel logistics, and cultural etiquette. Students will also engage in reading and learning from video lectures and group discussions.
- 2) On-site immersion in Japan (3rd & 4th week): The two-week trip to Japan will involve field trips including visits to culinary landmarks, local food markets, historical sites, and interactive workshops.
- 3) Post-immersion reflection and project (5th & 6th week): Upon returning, students will engage in reflective exercises and projects to consolidate their learning experiences.

Course Overview, Content and Objectives

This immersive summer course offers students a unique opportunity to explore contemporary Japanese society through the lens of food and culture. By traveling to Japan and engaging in site visits, homestays, hands-on experiences, and critical reflection, students will examine how food reflects and shapes cultural identity, community, politics, and the environment. Students will gain a critical analysis of Japanese culture and a global perspective on food-related issues that extend beyond national borders.

In this course, students will be expected to:

- 1) Cultivate cultural awareness through direct observation of Japanese daily life and food-related practices.
- 2) Examine the complex relationships between food and society in Japan, including historical, political, and environmental aspects.
- 3) Develop a critical lens for understanding global food issues through a Japanese context.
- 4) Communicate effectively and reflectively in both in-person and online settings.
- 5) Gain experiential knowledge of Japanese culinary traditions and everyday food practices.



Upon completing this course, students will have achieved the following learning outcomes:

- 1) Engage in fieldwork to explore Japanese food practices and food-related phenomena, gaining a deeper understanding of Japan's contemporary food landscape.
- 2) Analyze the role of food in shaping social dynamics, including family roles, community identity, and regional practices, while comparing these with personal cultural experiences.
- 3) Evaluate the impact of food policies and market trends on food culture and the environment, considering sustainable food choices and consumer behavior.
- 4) Recognize stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings surrounding Japanese food, and deepen understanding through direct interactions with local communities.
- 5) Apply an interdisciplinary perspective to study the connections between food, life, society, and the environment in contemporary Japanese society, fostering a global perspective through experiential learning.

Prerequisites:

3rd year standing.

There are no specific prerequisites for this course. However, a strong interest in Japanese culture, food, and an open mindset towards exploring new experiences are highly recommended.

While in Japan, there will be group meals where accommodation for allergy cannot be made on the spot. Please notify the instructor immediately if you have food allergies.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading

The course is evaluated on a numeric basis. The passing grade is 50%.

• Reflective Essays (pre 2% + post 10%)	12%
• Daily Peer Discussion Circle (X6)	12%
• Quizzes (3 X 5%)	15%
• Fieldwork Reports (3 X 5%)	15%
• Research Project	36%
○ Proposal 5%	
○ Video 25%	
○ Peer reviews and comments 6% (X6)	
• Participation	10%

Criteria for active participation:

Active participation means engaging consistently and thoughtfully in all parts of the course, both in Canada and during the Japan program. This includes:

- Being on time for all meetings, activities, and assignments, showing respect for others' time and responsibilities
- Attending all required sessions, activities, and site visits
- Actively contributing to group discussions, collaborative tasks, and fieldwork by showing initiative, being prepared, responsible, and supportive of peers
- Demonstrating respect, curiosity, and cultural humility by working to understand cultural differences through listening, reflection, and behavior
- Completing the final course evaluation survey



Required Readings and Videos

Ishige, Naomichi. *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*. Translated by Ishige Naomichi and Michael Brase, Routledge, 2001.

An additional list of academic articles will be on Canvas.

Course schedule (Tentative)

Week 1 & 2 Online lectures, quizzes, and pre-course reflective essay

Week 3

May 24 Sun Arrive in Tokyo (student's own arrangements)
May 25 Mon Orientation in the afternoon, field trip, cooking class
May 26 Tue [Devoted for JPT395B]
May 27 Wed [Devoted for JPT395B]
May 28 Thurs Lecture on health and food
May 29 Fri Toyosu Market & Tsukiji Market tour
May 30 Sat Train to Kyoto; Homestay
May 31 Sun Homestay

Week 4

June 1 Mon Arashiyama & Shojin Ryori
June 2 Tue Ritsumeikan University & interview & discussion & Tea ceremony
June 3 Wed [Devoted for JPT395B]
June 4 Thurs [Devoted for JPT395B]
June 5 Fri [Devoted for JPT395B]
June 6 Sat [Devoted for JPT395B]
June 7 Sun Departure from Kyoto

Week 5-6 Final project, reflective essay, peer reviews