In this course, we will examine the cultural history of Japan through a close reading of a sequence of mostly literary texts from antiquity to the twentieth century. Throughout the semester, we will focus our discussion on the problems of gender ideology and the quest for personal identity within a culture that has always given primacy to the group over the individual. The interest in self-expression is further reflected in the autobiographical character of many of the writings, including a number of the fictional works. The readings will include The Tale of Genji, The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi, and Edwin Reischauer’s survey of Japanese history (Japan: Tradition and Transformation).