

Society and Culture in Japan (Fall of 2017)

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 fictional works. The readings will feature *The Tale of Genji*, *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, Tanizaki Junichiro's *Seven Japanese Tales*, and Edwin Reischauer's survey of Japanese history (*Japan: Tradition and Transformation*). Despite the 400 level listing for this class, I have no expectation that students have had any previous course on East Asia. Course requirements include a midterm exam and a take-home final, which will give students an opportunity to concentrate on those class materials which most interest them.