

Kyoto: Center of Japan's Religion and Culture Wintersession 2008



Hands-on observation and critical analyses of religion and culture in Kyoto, Japan's capital for over a millennium.

Topics include: Shinto and Buddhism in traditional Japanese art and culture, such as "tea ceremony," calligraphy, poetry, theater and martial arts; Shinto and Japan's appreciation of nature; Japan's selective memory of the Pacific War and Japan's growing nationalism; today's Buddhist clergy as specialists of the world of the dead, in sharp contrast to the earlier (pre-17th century) focus on meditation and acts of mercy for the living; "new religions" in contemporary Japanese society and politics; Japan's assimilation of Western religions, as manifested in youth culture; the complicity of religion in the resurgence of nationalism and xenophobia; the contemporary Japanese fascination with the "other world".

Location: Kyoto will be the center of operation with side trips to Nara, Ise and, if possible, Hiroshima.

Prerequisite: At least one course in Asian religions. Preference given to students of Asian religions and of East Asian Studies. Japanese language not required. Students who have never been to Japan, but have a strong interest in Japan, would be preferred.

Enrollment: Limited to 10 students with written permission of the instructor.

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