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Japanese 3042: Topic course
Japanese Society Today 日本社会の今
University of North Texas --- spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Kaori Furuya
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**Class Hour: 9:30-10:50 am on Tuesdays
and Thursdays**
Classroom: Lang 205
**Office Hour: 8:20-9:20 am on Tuesdays and
Thursdays or by appointment**

Prerequisite for this course

The completion of JAPN 2050 or equivalent

Course Description & Objectives:

This course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Japanese society by exploring its unique characteristics, cultural aspects, and evolving challenges. Through reading and discussion, students will gain insights into various facets of Japan, including its geography, population dynamics, transportation systems, food culture, environmental concerns, and globalization.

The objectives of the course are as follows:

1 Explore Japan's National Characteristics

- Understand Japan's geography, population, seasons, and disaster preparedness.
- Examine urban and rural living and challenges like depopulation and regional revitalization.

2 Discover Japan's Transportation and Food Culture

- Learn about the Shinkansen, Tokyo's train systems, and Japanese cuisine.
- Explore roadside stations and regional food specialties like B-grade gourmet.

3 Examine Environmental and Global Issues

- Understand efforts to combat global warming and promote sustainability.
- Analyze Japan's industrial shifts and its role in a globalized world.

4 Develop Language Skills

- Expand vocabulary related to these topics.
- Enhance oral expression and critical thinking in Japanese by expressing opinions and asking questions effectively.

Learning Outcomes:

1 Comprehension:

- Demonstrate an understanding of Japan's geography, population dynamics, and cultural aspects.

- Analyze the challenges and solutions related to Japan's regional revitalization and depopulation.

2 Cultural and Social Awareness:

- Identify key elements of Japan's transportation systems and food culture.
- Discuss the balance between traditional practices and modern innovations in Japanese society.

3 Critical Thinking:

- Evaluate Japan's efforts to address environmental concerns and adapt to globalization.
- Compare and contrast rural and urban living conditions in Japan.

4 Language Proficiency:

- Use an expanded vocabulary to discuss contemporary issues in Japanese.
- Express opinions and ask relevant questions in Japanese with greater confidence and clarity.

5 Practical Application:

- Apply critical thinking to analyze Japanese societal issues and articulate well-informed viewpoints.
- Demonstrate improved oral communication skills in discussions related to course topics.

Required Materials:

クローズアップ日本事情15 —日本語で学ぶ社会と文化 Japan Up Close: 15 Lessons on Society and Culture in Japanese. Sasaki, Mizue, Japan Times
A few more readings on Canvas

Free Online Resource and Dictionaries:

- <https://kanjilive.com/> (A free study tool for kanji learning developed by University of Chicago)
- <http://tangorin.com/>
- <http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/cgi-bin/wwwjdic.cgi?1C>
- <http://jisho.org/>

Free Online Apps:

- Japanese (Android)
- Akebi (Android)
- Imiwa (iOS)
- Shirabe Jisho (iOS)

Grading Scales:

Homework assignments (22 times-2 lowest)	30%
Quizzes (12 times- 2 lowest)	20%
Tests (3 times)	30%
Final Exam (oral part +paper)	20%
Total	100

900 – 1000 = A 800 – 899 = B 700 – 799 = C 600 – 699 = D 599 or below = F

April 10 is the last day to drop the course. If you submit your drop paperwork by this date, you will receive a W or WF on your transcript, which will not be calculated into your GPA.

Attendance & Participation

- Students who accumulate eight or more absences will receive a grade of F in accordance with UNT policy.

Homework Assignments (30%):

Your homework is to preview the material for each class by reading and completing the assigned comprehension sheet. Please ensure you complete the assigned sheet before each class and submit it at the end of the class.

Quizzes (20%):

There will be 12 vocabulary quizzes based on each reading material. Two lowest scores will be dropped.

Tests (30%):

For the oral tests, you will discuss the readings and lessons from the class, asking both simple and complex questions to the other person while responding to their questions clearly. The conversation should flow smoothly, and you should be able to ask about things you don't understand. You will also need to express your own opinions effectively, ensuring that the content of your speech is appropriate. Lastly, being well-prepared for the discussion is essential to succeed in the test. There will be **three oral tests** during the course, each assessing these skills and your ability to engage in meaningful conversation.

Paper + presentation (20%)

Please choose one of the topics provided in class and write a paper. It is essential that you do not use any AI tools or devices while completing this assignment. Any violation of academic integrity, as determined by me, the instructor, will result in an F for the course.

If I as instructor see any form of academic integrity violation, you will receive an F for this course. The final paper is required to receive a grade higher than an F.

NOTE: If any changes are made during the semester (especially during the first module), I will post them in the syllabus section on Canvas and announce them in class.

Weekly Schedule:

Week I	クラスの紹介、自己紹介、一課 14 ページ (日本の面積と国土) 一課14-16ページ: 日本の人口と四季
Week II	クイズ 1、一課: 17 ページ: 地震とその準備 二課: 22, 26 ページ: 日本の都市
Week III	クイズ 2、二課: 21, 25 ページ: 日本のいろいろ, 日本の都市の家と田舎の家 二課: 23, 24, 28 ページ: 過疎化
Week IV	クイズ 3、12 24, 28 ページ: 地方創生 復習 (ふくしゅう)
Week V	試験 日本曜日: 三課: 新幹線 29-31, 38 ページ
Week VI	三課: 地下鉄 33-34 ページ クイズ 5、三課: 東京の電車の地図 35, 36 ページ、
Week VII	四課: 和食 44, 52 ページ 四課: 道の駅 46 ページ
Week VIII	クイズ 6、四課: 和食 44 ページ 四課: B級グルメとご当地グルメ 48 ページ
Week IX	クイズ 7、ペーパーについて

	試験
Week X	十一課: 温暖化防止 115ページ 十一課: 資源の再利用 117ページ
Week XI	クイズ 8, 十一課: 温暖化の暑い日の工夫 118, 120ページ 十三課: 日本の産業構造 130ページ
Week XII	クイズ 9、グローバル化 十三課: 132ページ 十三課: グローバル社会 134ページ
Week XIII	十三課: 昔と今とAI 133ページ クイズ 10、復習
Week XIV	ペーパードラフト 2 試験 3
Week XV	Review
Paper	

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Course Evaluation:

The Student Evaluation, SPOT, will be available at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on this class. The SPOT is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT, and responses are used by the department in evaluating the faculty. We work to continually improve our courses, so we appreciate your feedback!

DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR:

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips,

etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.deanofstudents.unt.edu

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, & ASSAULT

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources>. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

Mission of the World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures: Representing many world languages, literatures and cultures, our dedicated faculty promote excellence in research, teaching and professional service. Committed to cultural diversity and inclusivity, we teach our undergraduate and graduate students communication, critical thinking and research skills for competitive employment around the world.

Vision: We strive to establish a reputation both nationally and internationally in research, teaching and professional service. Seeking harmony in diversity, we foster global literacy, responsible citizenship and interdisciplinarity.

Minor in Japanese:

The minor consists of the seven (7) courses (JAPN 1010, 1020, 2040, 2050, 3020, and 3030 and one more course at the 3000 or 4000 level). All courses require a grade of C or higher.

Certificate in Japanese:

Certificate of Achievement in Japanese consists of eight courses: JAPN 1010, 1020, 2040, 2050, two 3000 and two 4000 courses. All courses require a grade of C or higher.

Honor Society:

UNT has a chapter of the Japanese National Honor Society (JNHS). The mission of the society is to recognize our outstanding students and encourage their scholastic achievement and excellence in the study of Japanese language. In addition, we aim to promote ways for students to use Japanese on campus and in the community. Certificates of Excellence and red-and-white cords to wear at graduation will be given to students who are granted membership in the society. The following is the criteria for the membership of JNHS in addition to the active participation in Japanese Honor Society, a student organization by invitation for activities and individual projects.

JNHS requirement:

- completion of 5 semester courses of Japanese language study at the college level
- GPA of 3.5 in Japanese language courses
- overall GPA of 3.0

Study Abroad:

UNT Japanese program strongly encourages students to have an opportunity to study abroad in Japan.

We have currently three direct exchange programs set up in Japan:

- Kansai Gaidai University (Osaka)
- Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto)
- Nanzan University (Nagoya)
- Nagasaki University of Foreign Study (Nagasaki)