

Japanese 01-H
Introduction to the Japanese Language
Amherst College

Course Instructors

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Course Description

This course is designed for students who have never previously studied Japanese. The course will introduce the overall structure of Japanese, basic vocabulary, the two syllabaries of the phonetic system, and some characters (*Kanji*). The course will also introduce the notion of "cultural appropriateness for expressions," and will provide practice and evaluations for all four necessary skills -- speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Participation in two group meetings (Mondays and Wednesdays) per week is required throughout the semester.

As mentioned above, this course is designed to teach students who have **no background** in Japanese.

Required books

Japanese: The Stage Step Method. (Wako Tawa, 2008)

1. *Grammar-Reference Book*;
2. *Step Guide Book (Vol. 1)*;
3. *Kanji for Writing Book*

Students can purchase the above textbook at the department (Webster 110). The material cost will be charged to your account. If you prefer to pay cash, please indicate your preference to us as soon as possible.

• **What to bring to the class:**

Please know the function of each book of this textbook series:

Grammar Reference Book = This is the grammar book that you should study before coming to class. This book should also be used to review (there is no need for you to bring this book to class):

Step Guide Book = This is essentially a workbook that will guide you in learning the material introduced in the *Grammar Reference Book*. **You must bring this book to class** because each class will be carried out using this book.

Writing Practice Book = This is a practice book for writing Japanese scripts. No need to bring this book to class.

Course Objectives

At Amherst, it takes about two years (full courses) for most students to master the following:

1. most of the essential structures of Japanese;
2. several hundred Kanji for writing and an additional few hundred for reading (the Japanese government identifies roughly 2,000 for Japanese children to learn before graduating from high school);
3. being able to engage in different kinds of conversations (some practical and some abstract) comfortably in Japanese;
4. being able to read and write cohesive paragraphs in Japanese;
5. being able to read different kinds of materials independently with the aid of dictionaries and instructors.

Course Organization

Monday	Practice sessions (with Sovjani-sensei)
Wednesday	New materials introduced (the class with Tawa-sensei)
Friday	(1) quiz or (2) assignment submission. Due: 5:00 p.m.

• **Division of Large and Practice sessions:**

The Japanese courses numbered 01 through 06 (sometimes even in Japanese 11-12) have large classes and small practice sessions. There is a good reason for us to have the two different classes. In the large classes, the students learn new material, which they learn how to use in the small practice sessions.

In Japanese 01 and 02, the use of some English in the large classes has proved to be more efficient than trying to do everything in Japanese because certain new concepts must be clarified, and some grammar or other questions must be answered efficiently. The use of Japanese even in large classes, however, will be reduced as the class advances each semester.

In practice sessions, however, there is really no reason for the students and the teacher to be using English, even in Japanese 01 and 02, because this is where the students should be immersed in the language, and, in fact, this is the only place where they can be immersed.

• **Things to remember in practice sessions:**

✓ **The students are required to study the material BEFORE coming to each practice session so that the practice sessions will move smoothly and meaningfully.**

✓ **Come to every practice session.** This is probably the most important way to participate in class and learn.

✓ **No English is allowed as soon as you enter your practice session.** Japanese should be used among the students in the room as well as with the teacher. Imagine the situation where you are among people who speak no English in Japan. You do have to speak Japanese to communicate. Your teacher or an English-speaking person will not be able to accompany you everywhere you go in Japan.

✓ Please avoid any grammar questions. If you must ask, wait until the session is over. When you have other questions (such as a meaning of a certain word), ask in Japanese.

✓ **Do not be afraid to make mistakes.** We will **not** take any points off for mistakes in the practice sessions. It is natural to make more mistakes when you speak more.

✓ Do not take it personally when corrected. **Being corrected is one of the best ways to learn to speak.** In fact, you must get used to being corrected all the time.

Grade Distribution

Class attendance and participation	15%
Practice sessions performance	15%
Assignments (quantity/quality)	15%
3 Tests	30% (10% each)
Mid-term oral quiz (presentation)	5%
Final oral quiz (application)	5%
Final (Written)	15%

- **Tentative test dates:**

Fridays: 2/22, 3/28, 4/18

- **Final Written Examination:**

5/12 (Monday) – 5/16 (Friday): Self-scheduled examination at a designated time and place by the college (will be announced in the **Registrar's website** – it is the student's responsibility to check this information).

IMPORTANT: For five-college interchange students: Unfortunately the academic calendar of the five-colleges is not uniform. It is our expectation, however, that all students who take Japanese at Amherst will follow the Amherst calendar, including the final examination schedule as well as the daily schedule. To be fair to other students, we will NOT be able to make special arrangements for the final examinations for the five-college students.

Policies on deadlines and quizzes

Being successful in a Japanese language class requires meeting deadlines for frequent assignments and preparing thoroughly for quizzes and classes. We understand, however, that keeping up with frequent requirements for a Japanese class may be difficult at times. We have therefore made the following policies to have a little more flexibility.

- We allow each student to **submit two assignments late per semester**, but the late assignments must be completed by the following Monday, 5:00 pm.
- No make-up quiz will be given under any circumstances, but the students will have **an option of correcting any quiz**; in this case, some points may be added to the original grade, and the number of point depends on the quality of corrections.
- No delays are allowed for the final written examination or the final oral presentation.
- It is **not** possible to give a make-up class or practice session to a student who was absent. It is your responsibility to check the daily schedule and to know what you have missed with your classmate(s). Please do not ask your instructor if you have missed anything important when you were absent because the answer is always YES. If you have **specific questions**, we would be happy to meet with you at our offices.
- **Other exceptions** can be made only with the class Dean's or your doctor's note.

Recommendations

- **Studying and practicing regularly is the single most important requirement for learning Japanese well for the course.** We have observed over and over again a strong correlation between steady study habits and performance in this class: we have **never** met a student who did well in this course without attending classes and evaluation sessions regularly. On the other hand, everyone who takes attendance seriously does well in the course.
- **Use Japanese as much as possible in all sessions.**
- **Communicate with your instructor regularly** via any method you may have: e-mail, phone, office visit, etc. Everyone has problems in learning Japanese. Silence or absence from classes is not an effective way to communicate your issues. No problem is a small problem. We deal with every issue seriously, so please bring any issues you have to us as soon and as often as possible.

Kanji (character) reference books – not required (optional)

We have not ordered these books at any bookstores in town because we do not know how many students are interested in them. You can order any of them through any bookstore in town or via the internet. The basic information on characters are given in our textbooks and will be explained in class, but having a book that explains them in greater detail will certainly facilitate your learning of the characters.

The following books are not required, but for those who wish to have some reference books, especially on the characters, we can recommend any of the following three:

1. *A Guide to remembering Japanese characters*. Kenneth G. Henshall.
Tuttle Language Library.

This is a good source book for learning the origin of each character, or Kanji, which may help students of Japanese to learn Kanji more effectively. It even gives a mnemonic method for each character. A weakness of this book is that the model characters are not well drawn. It is very important for students to have well-formed models when practicing the characters. 673 pages total.

2. *Kanji and Kana: A Handbook and dictionary of the Japanese writing system*.
Wolfgang Hadamitzky and Mark Spahn. Charles E. Tuttle Company.

A concise Kanji dictionary, in which you can find all Joyo Kanji (the Kanji determined by the Japanese government to be necessary for all educated people to know – about 2000 Kanji) with necessary information, such as radicals, different readings, and example words for each Kanji. This is a very convenient first Kanji dictionary, but it is not a comprehensive one, so you will not be able to use it to look up words in Kanji compounds that you may need in intermediate and advanced Japanese classes. 394 pages total.

3. *Read Japanese Today*. Len Walsh. Charles E. Tuttle Company.

This is a very compact and fun book about Kanji characters. The book explains the system of Kanji, its origins, and provides readings of Kanji compounds. It is light reading and quite entertaining. But you should be aware that some of the Kanji that the author uses are old; knowing old Kanji could be helpful in some ways but is not necessary. 159 pages total.

We have not ordered these books at any bookstores in town because we do not know how many students are interested in them. You can order any of them through any bookstores in town or via the internet.

The basic information on characters are given in our textbooks and will be explained in class, but having a book that explains them in greater detail will certainly facilitate your learning of the characters.