

**Japanese 01 (Fall semester)**  
**Introduction to the Japanese Language**  
**Amherst College**

**Course instructor**

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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) and two small group practice sessions (Tuesdays and Thursdays) per week are required throughout the semester.

As mentioned above, this course is designed to teach students who have **no background** in Japanese. If you have studied Japanese before coming to this course, please talk to your professor.

**Required books**

*The Japanese Stage-Step Course* (Wako Tawa, 2009). Routledge.

1. *The Grammar Textbook*;
2. *Workbook 1*;
3. *The Writing Practice Book*

The textbooks are available at Amherst Books in town.

**Course objectives**

At Amherst, it takes four semesters for most students to master the following:

1. most of the essential structures of Japanese, including complex structures;
2. several hundred Kanji for writing and an additional few hundred for reading;
3. being able to engage in different kinds of conversations (some practical and some abstract) comfortably in Japanese;
4. being able to read different kinds of materials independently with the aid of dictionaries and instructors;
5. being able to write cohesive paragraphs using good structures in a culturally appropriate manner.

## **Course organization**

<b>Monday</b>	The class meets in Webster 101. New material will be introduced. <b>Before coming to this class, students are expected to thoroughly read the material to be covered in class.</b> We do not expect the students to have learned the new vocabulary for this class.
<b>Tuesday</b>	Small group practice sessions will be held in Webster 115. The material introduced on Monday will be practiced. <b>Before coming to this session, students are expected to have reviewed the Monday material and have learned the new vocabulary.</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	The class meets in Webster 101. New material will be introduced. <b>Before coming to this class, students are expected to thoroughly read the material to be covered in class.</b> We do not expect the students to have learned the new vocabulary for this class.
<b>Thursday</b>	Small group practice sessions will be held in Webster 115. The material introduced on Wednesday will be practiced. <b>Before coming to this session, students are expected to have reviewed the Wednesday material and have learned the new vocabulary.</b>
<b>Friday</b>	Either a written test or a homework assignment will be scheduled.

### **1. Division of large classes and small 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 English 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.**

### **2. What to bring to the class:**

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

#### ***Grammar Textbook:***

Students must read the assigned pages in this grammar textbook before coming to class. This book should also be used to review any grammatical points. There is no need for you to bring this book to class. In fact, during class, you are not allowed to use this book or the notes you make.

#### ***Workbook:***

This workbook will guide you through learning the material introduced in the *Grammar Textbook*. **You must bring this workbook to every class** because each class will be carried out with this book.

#### ***Writing Practice Book:***

This book should be used to practice writing in the Japanese scripts. There is no need to bring this book to class, unless otherwise specified in the daily schedule.

### 3. Practice session time (Tuesday and Thursday):

Practice sessions are scheduled in the following times.

(1) 9:00 – 9:50      (2) 10:00 – 10:50      (3) 11:30 – 12:20      (4) 1:00 – 1:50

Each of these four sessions may be divided into two smaller sessions.

#### **Daily schedules**

The daily schedules will be posted to the J01 course site. You will find the class contents, preparation necessary for each class, and information about tests and assignments in the daily schedules.

#### **Grade distribution**

Attendance (all four days)	5%
Practice session performance	10%
Homework assignments (quantity/quality)	10%
4 Written tests	40% (10% each)
2 Oral tests	10% (5% each)
Final written examination	15%
Kanji/katakana quizzes	5%
Effort	5%

#### **Policies**

Being successful in a Japanese language class requires meeting deadlines for frequent assignments and preparing thoroughly for tests and classes. We understand, however, that keeping up with frequent requirements for Japanese class may be difficult at times. We have therefore made the following policies on homework assignments and tests to have a little more flexibility. The policies on attendance and practice session are also stated below.

##### **1. Homework assignments**

- (1) Homework assignment is due by **1 PM on Friday** unless otherwise stated. Points will be deducted for a late submission, except when the student uses a late option (see below). Each homework assignment will be graded ( $\surd+$ ,  $\surd$ , or  $\surd-$ ). For the final cumulative grade, the lowest grade on homework assignments will be dropped.
- (2) **Corrections:**  
When correction is required, the students correct mistakes on their own as much as they can and resubmit the work **by 3 pm** on the following **Tuesday**. The students should come to ask questions when they cannot make the corrections themselves. **Second and complete** submission must be made **by 3 pm** on the following **Thursday**. Some points may be added to the original grade, and the number of points depends on the quality of the corrections. An assignment with corrections unfinished or not made by the deadline will be considered incomplete work.

- (3) **Late option:**  
The students are allowed to submit one homework assignment late per semester without any penalty. The late assignment must be completed **by 3 PM** on Monday of the following week or the time the student and the instructor have agreed upon. Speak with the instructor **prior to** the original due date, when using this option
- (4) No work (either an initial work or correction) will be accepted for credits after the deadline for corrections on Thursday, except when the student uses a late option.

## 2. Four written tests

- (1) No make-up tests will be given under any circumstances.
- (2) **Corrections:**  
When correction is required, the students correct mistakes on their own as much as they can and resubmit the work **by 3 pm** on the **following Tuesday**. The students should come to ask questions when they cannot make the corrections themselves. **Second and complete** submission must be made **by 3 pm** on the following **Thursday**. Some points may be added to the original grade, and the number of points depends on the quality of the corrections. No additional points will be given if submitted after the deadline on Thursday, except when the student uses a late option.
- (3) **Late option:**  
The students are allowed to take one written test late per semester without any penalty. The late quiz must be completed by Monday of the following week or the time the student and the instructor have agreed upon. Speak with the instructor **prior to** the original test date, when using this option

## 3. Two oral tests

- (1) No make-up tests will be given under any circumstances.
- (2) No delays are allowed for the two oral tests.

## 4. Final written examination

- (1) No make-up examinations will be given under any circumstances.
- (2) No delays are allowed for the written final examination.

The final exam will be a self-scheduled examination, in which the students choose one of the ten specified exam periods during the final examination period, 12/18 (Sa) - 12/22 (W). The time and place for the self-scheduled examination will be designated by the College and announced on the Registrar's website later in the semester. It is the student's responsibility to check this information. Registrar's site: <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/finalexams/selfscheduledexams>

**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 final examinations for the five-college students.

## 5. Kanji/Katakana quizzes

- (1) No make-up quizzes will be given under any circumstances.
- (2) For the final cumulative grade, the lowest grade on kanji/katakana quizzes will be dropped.
- (3) **Late option:**  
The students are allowed to take one kanji/katakana quiz late per semester without any penalty. The late quiz must be completed within a week from the original quiz date or the time the student and the instructor have agreed upon. Speak with the instructor **prior to** the original quiz date, when using this option

## 6. Attendance

- (1) Every absence from class/session will negatively affect the student's attendance credit. **When the students need to miss a class, inform the instructor beforehand.** Their absence not only affects the students themselves, but everyone in class. We work hard to make each class as efficient and effective as possible and we may need to reorganize groups if someone will be absent. It is **not** possible to give a make-up class or make-up practice session to a student who was absent. It is the students' responsibility to check the daily schedule and to know what they have missed. Please do not ask the instructor if you have missed anything important when you were absent, because the answer is always YES. If the students have specific questions, we would be happy to meet individually.
- (2) Tardiness for class/practice session will also be penalized.

## 7. Practice session

- (1) In each practice session, the students' performance will be graded.
- (2) **The students are required to study the material thoroughly BEFORE coming to each practice session so that the practice session will move smoothly and meaningfully.**
- (3) Come to every practice session. This is probably the most important way to participate in class and learn.
- (4) **No English is allowed as soon as the students enter the practice session.** Japanese should be used among the students in the room as well as with the teacher. Imagine that you are among people who speak no English in Japan. You have to speak Japanese to communicate. Your instructor or an English-speaking person will not be able to accompany you everywhere you go in Japan.
- (5) **Avoid any grammar questions.** If the students must ask, wait until the session is over. When the students have other questions, such as a meaning of a certain word, ask in Japanese.
- (6) **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 the students speak more.
- (7) Do not take it personally when corrected. Being corrected is one of the best ways to learn to speak. In fact, the students must get used to being corrected all the time.

(8) **Sit-in Option:**

As mentioned above, the students are required to study the material thoroughly before coming to each practice session. In case the students are not fully prepared to participate in a practice session, it is suggested that the students use the Sit-in Option explained below.

The students have to come to a practice session, but do not participate in a session. The students sit at the back and learn by observing what other students are doing in a session. When the students choose to use this option, inform the instructor **prior to** a session. When the instructor finds during a practice session that a student is not prepared well enough to participate, the instructor may recommend her or him to take this option.

This option will not apply when the students are absent from a session. The students can use this option up to twice per semester without receiving any penalty. This means that the first two uses of this option will not affect the grade on “Practice session performance” or attendance credit. From the third time on, the students still receive an attendance credit, but no points will be given for the performance on that particular day.

## 8. Other exceptions

Other exceptions can be made only with the class Dean's note or your doctor's note.

### **Recommendations**

1. **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.
2. **Use Japanese as much as possible in all sessions.**
3. **Communicate with your instructor regularly.** 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.

### **Online learning tools**

The following site gives you:

- (1) some useful learning tools for Japanese, as well as
- (2) instructions for setting up your computer so that you can use it to read and write in Japanese.

[https://www.amherst.edu/offices/it/teaching\\_research/resources/languages/japanese](https://www.amherst.edu/offices/it/teaching_research/resources/languages/japanese)

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

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. *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.

2. *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.

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 bookstore in town or via the internet. The basic information on characters is 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.