

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

JAPANESE TRADITIONAL ART OF HUMOR

Subtitle	Ukiyoe, Gesaku, and Short Novels
Lecturer(s)	KATSUMATA, MOTOI
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2025 Spring
Day/Period	Mon.2
Campus	Mita
Classroom	465
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	88486
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Grade Type	S, A, B, C, D
K-Number	CIN-CO-00123-212-01

▼ Detail

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

Japanese society has loved humor and generated various humorous arts. Looking back in history, we can see the origins during the Edo period as the business of printing was becoming more established and images and words resonated throughout society.

In this course, we will examine the traditional arts of humor between the 17th and 19th centuries in English translation. Selections have been chosen in terms of connection between images and words. These include pictures, *gesaku* (戯作, popular fiction written in the mid-18th century), and short novels.

The focus of each class meeting will be on close reading and discussion. Students are therefore expected to write brief response essays (approximately 200 words) before each class, starting with our 2nd meeting and continuing through to the 14th meeting. This should include a personal reactions and potential discussion topics.

As a final project, each student will be required to submit a final paper. The writing assignments will be evaluated for their coherence, critical argumentation, persuasiveness, and thoroughness of engagement with the material. Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 2 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussions, preparation for exams, etc.).The class will be held all in English.

Active Learning Methods ⓘ [Description](#)

Discussions, Debates

Preparatory Study

Prior to every class, you need to read the text and submitt a short report(approximately 150 words).

Course Plan

Lesson 1

Introduction

Lesson 2

Pictures 1: Manga(1)  
Hagio Moto“The Willow Tree (*Yanagi no Ki*, 柳の木)”

Lesson 3

Picture 2: Zen-picture  
Sengai(仙厓)'s works

Lesson 4

Pictures 3: Manga(2)  
Nakamura Hikaru“Saint Young Men (*Seinto Oniisan*, 聖☆お兄さん)”

Lesson 5

Pictures 4: Ukiyo-e 1  
Namazu-e(鯰絵)

Lesson 6

Pictures 5: Ukiyo-e 2  
Utagawa Kuniyoshi(歌川国芳)’s works

Lesson 7

Gesaku 1: Monsters(1)  
"The Monster Takes a Bride (*Bakemono Yomeiri*, 化物よめいり)"

Lesson 8

Gesaku 2: Monsters(2)  
"The Monster Takes a Bride (*Bakemono Yomeiri*, 化物よめいり)"

Lesson 9

Gesaku 3: Playboy(1)  
“Playboy, Grilled Edo Style (*Edo Umare Uwaki no Kabayaki*, 江戸生艶気蒲焼)”

Lesson 10

Gesaku 4: Playboy(2)  
“Playboy, Grilled Edo Style (*Edo Umare Uwaki no Kabayaki*, 江戸生艶気蒲焼)”

Lesson 11

Gesaku 5: Playboy(3)  
“Playboy, Grilled Edo Style (*Edo Umare Uwaki no Kabayaki*, 江戸生艶気蒲焼)”

Lesson 12

Short novel 1: Male-male sexuality in samurai society  
Preface and ‘Through Bearing an Umbrella, He was Rained Upon’ from “The Great Mirror of Male Love (*Nanshoku Ōkagami*, 男色大鑑)”

Lesson 13

Short novel 2: Money(1)  
"The Foremost Lodger in the Land" from “The Japanese family Storehouse (*Nihon Eitai Gura*, 日本永代蔵)”

Lesson 14

Short novel 3: Money(2)  
‘Mr. Heitarō’ from “Worldly Mental Culculations (*Seken Munezan’yō*, 世間胸算用)”

Other

Office hour

Method of Evaluation

Attendance on time 6 %  
Class participation 37%  
Web posts 32%  
Final paper 25%

Textbooks

N/A: The teacher prepares pdf text for each week.

Reference Books

Ihara Saikaku, The Great Mirror of Male Love, tr. Paul Gordon Schalow (California: Stanford University Press, 1990).  
Ihara Saikaku, Worldly Mental Calculations, tr. Ben Befu (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

Lecturer's Comments to Students

Sometimes we read and discuss about sexual and religious topics.