

Sophia University –Summer Session 2026

July 1 – July 22, 2026 *July 1: Orientation. *July 3: No class day

Date: January 2026

Course Title	Food and Social Issues in Japanese Literature and Film
Course Code	HUZ200
Instructor	Anne McKnight
Class Period	1st period (9:00-10:40)
Course Format	In-Person
Language of Instruction	English. 日本語も役に立ちますが Japanese is not required.
Maximum class size	40
Course Description	The course surveys at how food appears as a social issue in modern and contemporary—meaning, post-Meiji to now—Japanese fiction and trans-Pacific fiction and documentary film. Half of the course uses works by Japanese writers; the other half looks at film and literature works by Canadian and US creators that follow the reception of Japanese food in the US. The purpose is to track shifting understandings of national cuisine and modernity in the 20th and 21st century and see how food works in both personal histories and collective histories. Students should emerge with a greater understanding of how food and the social issues surrounding it have changed in the modern era. Field trip/s to an organic farm, Yokohama Chinatown, restaurants in the “Tokyo Heterotopias” project, and the Yokohama Rāmen Museum to be discussed. (Field trip/s may be planned on a weekend. Details to be discussed with the class.)
Course Objectives	Students should emerge with a greater understanding of how food and the social issues surrounding it have changed in the modern era. Goals are: to identify and discuss current issues of food security, labor, food and eco-systems, modern attitudes to meat and vegetarianism, food and gender. And to give a short presentation on a current issue related to food in Tokyo, elsewhere in the Japanese archipelago, or trans-Pacific reception of Japanese food. Students should also be able to locate various social issues in literary works (aestheticism/Japonisme/Orientalism; public health; global trade relations and food; nostalgia, etc.). The final goal is to be able to speak and write clearly in a well-researched way in the “deliverables” of a short presentation and a short paper.
Expected work outside of class	Reading of short stories, excerpts of novels and/or critical essays. Preparation of homework assignments, such as discussion questions and a short presentation. (1.5-2 hours each class + independent research for presentation)

Course Materials	N/A
	Purchase of textbook: not necessary
	e-book: acceptable
Moodle	Texts will be posted on Moodle; reading the relevant texts before class meets is mandatory.
Contact Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • via Email <p>*The email address will be available at CGED office or informed by the instructor in the first class if needed.</p>
Evaluation (Attendance, Class participation, in-class assignments, final exam, quizzes, etc.)	<p>20% participation</p> <p> 10% attendance</p> <p> 10% preparation and in-class participation</p> <p>30% discussion questions—(best 6 of 8 sets)</p> <p>10% fieldwork report</p> <p>10% presentation on current issue</p> <p>10% quizzes (best 10)</p> <p>20% final paper</p>
Other comments	-
Class schedule	<p>*July 1: Orientation</p> <p>*July 3: No-Class Day</p> <p>*(Field trip/s may be planned on a weekend. Details to be discussed with the class.)</p>
	<p>[DAY 1]</p> <p>Masaoka Shiki haiku on food</p>
	<p>[DAY 2]</p> <p>Fukuzawa Yukichi on meat and modernity, Kanagaki Robun, “Aguranabe” on beef and social status (アグランベ)</p>
	<p>[DAY 3]</p> <p>Food security and insecurity—changing diet in Meiji Japan, the Rice Riots, current issues, selections from <i>Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts</i> by Vaclav Smil and Kazuhiko Kobayashi; current news articles</p>
	<p>[DAY 4]</p> <p>Readings on Yokohama Chinatown and Chinese food in Japan; begin Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, “The Gourmet Club” (美食俱楽部)</p>
	<p>[DAY 5]</p> <p>finish Tanizaki, “The Gourmet Club” (美食俱楽部)</p>
	<p>[DAY 6]</p> <p>Ruth Ozeki, beginning of My Year of Meats</p>
	<p>[DAY 7]</p> <p>Continue Ruth Ozeki, My Year of Meats</p>
	<p>[DAY 8]</p> <p>Fukuoka Masanobu, One Straw Revolution (わら一本の革命) and natural</p>

farming (excerpts)
[DAY 9] The Makanai: Cooking for the Maiko House (TV series)
[DAY 10] Screening of Jiro Dreams of Sushi Draft of presentation due
[DAY 11] Discussion of Jiro Dreams of Sushi
[DAY 12] Work day for presentations
[DAY 13] Presentations
[DAY 14] Presentations

*Course format, evaluation methods and class schedule may be subject to change.

[Important Note Regarding Class Capacity]

Course enrollment in each course is on a first-come, first-served basis. Please be aware that once the maximum capacity is reached, you will no longer be able to select that course.

If you plan to transfer the credits to your home university, please consider alternative courses as well when making your study plan, in case the courses you want to take are full.