Japanese Program Description

The Japanese Program of the Department of Asian Languages and Literature at the University of Washington is a dynamic and growing community of scholars and teachers. Faculty members specialize in a variety of fields in Japanese language, linguistics, visual culture, and literature, including: Japanese language pedagogy, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, bilingualism, syntax, Noh drama, classical Japanese poetics, Okinawan fiction, modern Japanese publishing history, socially engaged art, diasporic literatures, literary history, and critical theory. The Program hosts a visiting scholar from Japan each spring, expanding research opportunities for our students and deepening our links with the Japanese academic world.

The Japanese Program offers B.A, M.A., and Ph.D. degrees, with specialization in literature or linguistics. Our undergraduate language courses focus on developing proficiency in Japanese. Linguistics courses promote a scientific approach to understanding Japanese language in use, with a focus on sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. In literary studies, students learn to analyze and interpret works of fiction, poetry, drama, and essays written throughout the span of Japan's literary history, from earliest times to the present day, and to understand the contexts in which such texts were produced. For a sample of classes offered, please visit the Course Catalog. Cross-regional studies are encouraged; the department also offers an undergraduate major in Asian Languages and Cultures that allows students to focus on Japanese and study another Asian language also. Extensive course offerings are available from the Department in Bengali (Bangla), Chinese (both modern and classical), Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Sanskrit, Pali, and the Prakrits, Thai, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

It is a goal of the graduate program in Japanese to enable its students to develop a solid competence in and sensitivity to language and text, as well as to acquire a sound understanding of appropriate literary, linguistic, and cultural theory. Please note that at the graduate level, the Japanese linguistics program focuses on applied linguistics. The Department of Asian Languages and Literature has close links with many other departments on campus, and its students regularly take courses in academic units such as American Ethnic Studies, Anthropology, Art History, Comparative Literature, Comparative Religion, English, History, the Jackson School of International Studies, Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, and the Simpson Center for the Humanities. The Department sponsors many lectures and colloquia, some in conjunction with other units on campus. With over 130,000 volumes in Japanese, the East Asia Library ranks among the top ten university-based collections of Japanese materials in the United States. The University of Washington also has a thriving Japan Studies Program, which unites Japan-related programs across the University.

Home to large and vibrant Japanese and Japanese-American communities and an active arts scene, Seattle offers many opportunities to experience Japanese culture firsthand. Seattle is the site of the Seattle Asian Art Museum and the Seattle International Film Festival, which annually presents the latest in Japanese cinema.

See degree requirements for Japanese: Major || Minor || M.A. || Ph.D.

Department of Asian Languages & Literature
University of Washington
225 Gowen Hall