

## Traditional Japanese Aesthetics and Design

### Instructor :

Arno Suzuki, MLA

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Lesson : Monday, Wednesday 14:30-16:00

Office: N/A

Office Hours : by appointment, after class

Subject code : 1032

### Course Description:

This is an introductory course to traditional Japanese aesthetics and design especially in the living environment such as architecture, landscape architecture and community design. We will learn the rationality, sustainability, environmentally friendly attitude from the past, hoping to apply them to our modern life and the future.

The course consists of visual lectures, discussion, design exercises, and term projects. The lecture introduces the evolution of Japanese houses, temples, shrines, gardens, community open spaces and cities from 7th to 20th century. We will focus on the meaning of each form; why they had to be designed and built that way in a particular natural and social context.

Related topics such as arts, religion, lifestyle, fashion, social system and foreign diplomacy of each era will be discussed. The traditional construction materials and methods will be introduced that the students can find their close relationship to the natural environment. Historical sites and events (e.g. festivals) in Kansai area will also be introduced to make students extracurricular activities more meaningful. The entire class will be held in English; however important cultural and technical terms in Japanese will be introduced as necessary.

There will be two term projects; one is to conduct a research on the living environment specific to where they are from, and the other is to plan or design your own 'Japanese' garden to reflect your own culture and thoughts. In these assignments in addition to the class discussion, participants will have an opportunity to revisit their own culture and to explore other cultures introduced by their classmates. Beginners in design and art should not worry at all because your rationality and creativity will be more appreciated than well-drawn imitation of a Japanese style.

The instructor holds BS from Kyoto University and MLA from University of California, Berkeley, and she practiced with professional license in both countries. She has been teaching this subject at University of California at Davis, Kyoto University and some other institutions.

## Resources

The teacher provides hand-outs for each class.

## Evaluation

Participation to the lecture and discussion 20%  
in-class exercises 20%  
Mid term project 20%  
Final project 20%  
Final exam 20%

No previous knowledge about Japanese culture or history is required.  
Design or drawing skills are not required, either.  
Assignments and evaluation criteria may change at the instructor's discretion depending on the class size, students' level and their interests.

## Notes:

The first class meeting will be Wednesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. There is no class meetings on Sep. 13, 15, or 27 because the instructor is out of town for conferences. To make up these lessons, a Friday afternoon field trip to Kyoto or a weekend field trip to Nara may be planned. Details will be discussed with students in the first meeting. Please prepare the transportation cost around 1,500 yen for a field trip.

## Course Schedule

- 1: Geography and history of Japan and Kansai area
- 2: Basics of traditional Japanese architecture
- 3: Japanese religions and origins of gardens
- 4: Nobles' houses, temples and gardens
- 5: Samurais' houses and gardens
- 6: Zen temples' dry Landscape Gardens
- 7: Mid-term project: 'Your hometown'
- 8: Tea ceremony rooms and their gardens
- 9: Large stroll gardens for imperial families and top-samurais
- 10: Modern Gardens from Meiji era
- 11: Current issues and future of the industry
- 12: Review and the final exam
- 13: Final Project: 'Your Japanese garden'

The schedule above is planned roughly on weekly basis, but not exactly. Schedule may change at the instructor's discretion depending on the class size, students' level and their interests.