Often identified as “the world’s first novel,” *The Tale of Genji* was written by Murasaki Shikibu, a lady-in-waiting who served in Japan’s imperial court at the turn of the eleventh century. For over a millennium since its appearance around 1000 CE, this tale of amorous intrigues, political rivalries, and aesthetic pursuits has captivated readers. It has been the object of rigorous literary scholarship, the focus of religious condemnation as well as veneration, and the inspiration for countless later writers, dramatists, or artists to create their own works of fiction, theatrical productions, or visual representations adapted from or indebted to *Genji*. From apocryphal “lost chapters” to medieval Noh plays, from risqué early modern parodic retellings to contemporary anime and manga, the influence of *Genji* is evident across the full range of Japanese cultural production.

In this class we will read the entire *Tale of Genji* (54 chapters) in English translation and aim to understand what has given the text its prominent place in Japanese as well as world literature. We will look at how *Genji* has been read and interpreted over the centuries and at its influence on other literature and forms of art. Our class meetings will typically begin with an introductory lecture that will help to situate the primary and secondary readings in their historical and cultural context. The focus of each class meeting, however, will be close reading and discussion of the *Genji* itself. Students are therefore expected to read and reflect upon the assigned materials prior to class and to participate actively in discussion.

Students will also be asked to write brief (about 250 well-chosen words) response essays to the weekly readings at least four times during the semester. These are to be posted to the online discussion forum the evening before class discussion. Short quizzes concerning the readings and lectures will be given occasionally. Each student will be asked to give a brief (5–10 minutes) oral presentation on one of the secondary readings (marked ○ below) in which the student identifies the main arguments of the reading, places them in context, and responds to them.

A short paper (5–7 pages in length) will be assigned halfway through the term. Suggested topics will be provided but students are welcome to formulate their own questions in consultation with the instructor. As a final project, each student will also be required to explore a later work (a Noh play, an apocryphal text, an adaptation, or transduction to another medium) inspired by the *Tale of Genji*. A list of suggested materials will be provided. The student will give an oral presentation on their project and will also submit a final paper (about 8–10 pages in length). Both writing assignments will be evaluated for their coherence, critical argumentation, persuasiveness, and thoroughness of engagement with the material.

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussions, preparation for exams, etc.).

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and class participation: 10%
- Quizzes: 10%
- First oral presentation: 10%
- Web posts: 15%
- Short paper: 15%
- Final presentation: 15%
- Final paper: 25%
Learning Goals:

- Develop skills as a reader of literary texts
- Consider reception synchronically, diachronically, and cross-culturally
- Think critically about how literary texts are canonized
- Think about the relationship of translations, adaptations, rewritings, transductions to the “original”
- Learn to give oral presentations on one’s research effectively

Instructor:

Prof. Matthew Fraleigh  
Mail: fraleigh@brandeis.edu  
Phone: (78173)63229

Class: M, W 3:30–4:50  
Office: Mandel 115  
Hours: M 1:00–3:00

Disabilities:

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

Extensions:

Extensions are not granted except in cases of medical or family emergency. Late work will be penalized one grade per day late; e.g. a paper turned that would have earned an A- had it been turned in on time Monday becomes a B+ if turned in Tuesday, a B if turned in Wednesday etc.

Academic Integrity:

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities (http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides (http://guides.library.brandeis.edu/c.php?g=301723).

Principal text, available for purchase at the Brandeis Bookstore

- Indicates required readings; ○ indicates optional readings.

Other readings will be available online and/or on reserve at Goldfarb Library.

Additional Complete Translations of Genji, on reserve in Goldfarb Library

Partial Translations of *Genji*, on reserve in Goldfarb Library


If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.

Additional Resources: The following are useful resources on *The Tale of Genji*, as well as Japan’s pre-modern history, culture, and literature. They are on reserve in Goldfarb Library.

- Thomas Harper and Haruo Shirane, eds., *Reading the Tale of Genji: Sources From the First Millennium* (Columbia UP, 2015).

Students who are interested in reading materials in Japanese (*Genji* in the original classical Japanese, in modern Japanese translation, or secondary scholarship) are encouraged to consult with the instructor.

**Week One – Overview**

Wednesday August 28: Introduction

**Week Two –**

Monday September 2 (Labor Day): no class

Wednesday September 4:

- “1. Kiritsubo” (Washburn, 3–21)
- “1. Kiritsubo: The Paulownia Pavilion” (Tyler, 1–18)

**Week Three –**

Monday September 9:

Wednesday September 11:

**Week Four –**
Monday September 16:

Wednesday September 18:

**Week Five –**
Monday September 23:

Wednesday September 25:

**Week Six –**
Monday September 30: Rosh Hashanah: No university exercises

Wednesday October 2:
Thursday October 3 (Brandeis Monday):

Week Seven –
Monday October 7:

Wednesday October 9: Yom Kippur: No university exercises

Week Eight –
Monday October 14: Indigenous Peoples’ Day / Sukkot: No university exercises

Tuesday October 15 (Brandeis Monday)
  ● “34. Wakana I” (Washburn, 642–701)

Wednesday October 16:

Week Nine –
Monday October 21: Shmini Atzeret: No university exercises

Wednesday October 23:
  ● “35. Wakana II;” “36. Kashiwagi” (Washburn, 702–784)

Week Ten –
Monday October 28:
  ○ Paul Gordon Schalow, “The Tale of Genji: ‘Two Cranes Flying Wing to Wing.’” In A Poetics of Courteous Male
Friendship in Heian Japan (U of Hawai‘i P, 2007), 116–162.

Wednesday October 30:

● “40. Minori;” “41. Maboroshi” (Washburn, 852–880)

Week Eleven –

Monday November 4:

● “42. Niou miya;” “43. Kōbai;” “44. Takekawa” (Washburn, 883–930)

Wednesday November 6:

● “45. Hashihime;” “46. Shiigamoto” (Washburn, 931–979)

Week Twelve –

Monday November 11:

● “47. Agemaki;” “48. Sawarabi” (Washburn, 980–1054)

Wednesday November 13

● “49. Yadoriki;” “50. Azumaya” (Washburn, 1055–1166)

Week Thirteen –

Monday November 18

● “51. Ukifune;” “52. Kagerō” (Washburn, 1167–1257)
Wednesday November 20


**Week Fourteen –**

Monday November 25


Wednesday November 27 Thanksgiving holiday: No university exercises

**Week Fifteen –**

Monday December 2:


Wednesday December 4: Final presentations

**Week Sixteen –**

Monday December 9: Final presentations

**Final papers due Friday December 13**