

**Discover Japan**  
**Honors Study Abroad — Spring Break, 2025**  
**Thurs., Mar. 20 to Friday, Mar. 28, 2025**

Join us for a one-week study abroad trip to Japan!

Upon landing, we will be off and running. We will begin in a place called Miyajima, famous for its “floating shrine” (a massive torii gate, made centuries ago from rot-resistant lumber, that juts out of the water of the Seto Inland Sea between Miyajima and Hiroshima) — and famous, too for its many deer, who walk beside you and happily eat straight from your hand. Next, we will spend a solemn half-day in Hiroshima, visiting the this city’s extraordinary Peace Museum. We will visit Osaka (Chicago’s “sister city”), tour the famous Osaka Castle, and thereafter spend two days in nearby Kyoto, Japan’s stunningly beautiful ancient capital and one of the only major Japanese cities **not** decimated by allied fire-bombs in the final months of WW2. From Kyoto, we will take a north-bound bullet train to Takayama, which embodies all the charm of “old Japan” (we will stay in an old-fashioned Japanese inn, a “ryokan,” while in Takayama). And from there, fittingly, we will travel south-bound to *uber*-modern Tokyo, just south-east of Takayama; and as you likely know, Tokyo is easily among the most eclectic, frenetic, remarkable cities on Planet Earth.

We cannot see everything in just a handful of days, but we will try our best to see and do what we can and embrace the awesome diversity of one of the world’s most extraordinary countries and cultures.

No prior experience with Japan is necessary; certainly no Japanese-language ability is required. In order to participate, you must be a member in good standing of Harper’s Honors Program, and you must enroll in Honors LIT 220, “Japanese Literature in Translation.” However, if you are not presently an Honors Program student, please do not let this stop you from applying. Without knowing it, you may indeed be qualified for membership in Honors, and applying for membership in our Honors Program is a simple, **non**-laborious process involving a one- or two-page application form and a friendly meeting with one of Harper’s Honors Co-Coordinators.



**Application Deadline:**

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

[Brochure | Program Overview \(via-trm.com\)](#)

## Contact Information:

Prof. Andrew Wilson, English Department  
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On-Campus Office, D-151a (a 15-second walk from Harper's Starbucks)

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## Dates

**Course Dates:** Honors LIT 220 (“Japanese Literature in Translation”) will begin meeting twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 p.m. to 1:45 pm, starting Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2025. Our course will last until the end of the semester May 7, 2025.

**Travel Dates:** Thursday, Mar. 20 (depart from O’Hare) - Friday, Mar. 28, 2025 (return to O’Hare)

## Trip at a Glance

March 21 to 23 . . .



- **Miyajima:** One of the (many) unusual things about our trip is that, in a single day, we will have two starkly different experiences: we will land in the Kansai (Osaka) region in the evening of Fri., Mar. 21. And in the morning of Sat., Mar. 22, we will rise (very) early and visit nearby Miyajima, a dreamy place that features Itsukushima, the above-mentioned “floating shrine” (we’ll coast within feet of it on a ferry), which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and which also stands as a revered emblem of Japan’s Shinto roots. After touring Miyajima for a few hours through the morning of 3/22, we will make our way

across the bay (again, by ferry) to Hiroshima. There, we will spend a somewhat more sober afternoon.

- **Hiroshima:** On August 6, 1945, just after eight in the morning, in a sudden and blinding flash, the world changed forever in Hiroshima, Japan: the Pandora’s Box of the atomic age cracked open. And ever since, the world has wrestled with the implications and often-dire consequences. If your eyes are wide open, you see those consequences each/every day in local, national, and global news-feeds — and if you pay attention to your own heartbeat, you can perhaps sometimes see and feel them there as well. Your opinion of the rightness or wrongness of the U.S.’s decision to drop the first-ever nuclear weapon on a mostly civilian populace might be different from that of the person to your left, the person to your right, and this is entirely okay. Our trip to Japan is not meant to lecture and not an effort to change anyone’s political point of view . . . but one thing is certain: if you travel to Japan with us, you will see (up close and personal, through photographs, artifacts, compelling video, and the courageous testimony of survivors) how the bomb impacted roughly 160,000 flesh-and-blood lives, real human beings, early risers who were working or heading to work, trekking to school, lying in hospital beds, shopping for groceries, etc. You will see — and you will never forget. We will visit Hiroshima’s Peace Museum, which is extraordinary, which points no fingers, which is dedicated to and believes squarely in the possibility of eternal human peace. We will also walk the grounds around the Peace Memorial and the “Atom Dome,” one of only a small handful of structures that survived the blast.
- **Osaka:** Osaka, Japan’s second-largest city, is known for its amazing food . . . but then again the food all across Japan is pretty incredible. We won’t be there long — just long enough to tour the city a bit on Sunday, Mar. 23, with a targeted stop at the Osaka Castle, among Japan’s most-visited historic sites. We’ll see a lot of temples while in Japan; we won’t see many *castles*, though, so while our stay in Osaka will be brief, it will add plenty to our week-long experience.

March 23 to 25 . . .



- **Kyoto:** This is possibly Professor Wilson’s favorite city in the world, the ancient capital, an unforgettable mix of ancient and modern, with every bit of Japan’s super-high fashion striding side by side with barefoot monks in little more than intricately wrapped sheets. We will feel that wildness immediately upon arrival, since even Kyoto’s central train depot, with its neon and artistic modern-ness, is a sight to behold. In Kyoto, we will tour “Gion,” otherwise known as the “geisha district.” As well, we will visit what might be the greatest Buddhist site in all of Japan, Kiyomizu Temple, which offers unbelievable views in every direction, which is well over a thousand years old and reportedly earthquake-proof, and which (like Miyajima’s “floating shrine”) is made of wood that has easily passed the test of time and even now, in the 3rd decade of the 21st C., is as good as new — and by the way, supposedly there is no nail, no metal screw, *anywhere* on the premises, which means that a visit to Kiyomizu is both spiritual and architectural. It is tricky to explain in perfect terms, and one should avoid cliches, but wandering here/there around Kiyomizu, which grows right out of a mountainside, gradually becomes godly, ethereal, *something* other-worldly — even the agnostics and atheists among us might agree?
- **Fushimi Inari:** Before leaving Greater Kyoto, we will make a quick visit (just a few stops away on the bullet train) to Fushimi Inari, an exceedingly photogenic outdoor Shinto Shrine that will likely be the highlight of our week for at least a few Harper students — thousands of bright-orange torii gates, one after another after another, seemingly without end, up and up and up. It is the best-possible example of an “interactive,” almost athletic trek into the heart of Japan’s Shinto past. Please bring your walking shoes, your reverence for nature, maybe a small bottle of water. (There are wild but friendly cats there, too, so bring your allergy pills if you think you might need . . . .)

March 25 to 26 . . .

- **Takayama:** From Kyoto, we will take a long (half-day) bullet-train ride to Takayama in the northern Gifu Prefecture of Honshu (Japan’s main island), a place that neither Professor Wilson nor Professor Bell has ever visited — so Takayama will likely be a novel experience for every Harper traveler. We will be entirely on our own in Takayama: no scheduled tour, no guide. Takayama is known for its old-world charm, its all-wooden structures, its arts/crafts and noodle shops, but the best part of our stay in here will be the stay itself: i.e., our overnight accommodation is a “ryokan,” a traditional Japanese inn (rather than a modern or modern-ish hotel). Of course there will be toilets and running water (don’t worry), but in other ways we will find that our ryokan experience closely resembles what travelers across Japan experienced a hundred, two hundred, even three hundred years ago: nothing mass produced; very simple furnishings made of natural and undoctored materials; simple (and healthy) food, much or all of which is likely to be grown right there on the premises; a profound quietness in the deep hours of the night and very early morning.

March 26 to 28 . . .

- **Tokyo:** Of course you know Tokyo: among the busiest, most populated, most high-tech cities on earth. We'll have about a day and half to capture as much of it as possible after arriving in the late afternoon/early evening of Wed., 3/26. We've scheduled a full-day Tokyo tour for Thursday, 3/27, and students can be sure in advance that our docent will be lively, informative, and outstanding — guides love to show off this near-indescribable city. We will visit the Meiji Jingu Shrine, Harajuku (the well-known, ultra-colorful mecca for teens and teens at heart), Omotesando (very luxurious, think Paris' Champs-Élysées or NYC's Fifth Avenue), and the exceedingly famous Shibuya District, probably one of the most photographed sites in all of Asia. The evening of Thursday, 3/27, will be our last night in Japan; of course we will celebrate and have dinner somewhere amazing.

**Food:** Some meals **are** indeed included in the overall price. All-you-can-eat breakfast is included at each of the hotels we'll be staying at through the week, and most/all of these hotels will likely serve both western-style breakfast (scrambled eggs and what-not) and "Japanese breakfast," which is rather different (definitely less fatty) from what we're used to here in the States, as you'll quickly learn if you join us. The ryokan in Takayama will provide both breakfast on March 26 and "bangohan" (dinner) upon our arrival the night before — as is customary in pretty much most/all ryokan-style inns across Japan. Professors Wilson and Bell would like to treat all students to dinner on our final night in Japan, March 27, but please know: students will be asked to pay on their own for some other meals: on-the-go lunches, "street food" here and there, some of the places we'll sit down for dinner in Osaka, Kyoto, etc. For meals, it is advisable that each student bring at least \$250 USD of cash (about 36,550 in Yen) — and by the way, it is easy as pie to exchange USD for Yen in each/every Japanese airport and often in the train stations across Japan; you would not have to acquire any Yen prior to departing O'Hare. (Incidentally, the U.S. dollar is currently doing very well in Japan.)

**Tickets, Tours, Etc.:** All pre-arranged tours are included in the overall price. It is possible that we will decide to do something impromptu — see some musical or theater performance, for ex., or something like this. If that happens, each student may be asked to pay his/her/their own way. But again, all pre-arranged tours and museum visits and such are included in the overall cost of the trip.

**Walking and Riding, Riding and Walking:** We wish to be up front about something: while in Japan, the Harper group will be doing a LOT of walking and a lot of riding on trains, both the local (subway) trains and of course the high-speed "bullet trains." Each new study-abroad trip differs from the one before: one might have a daily bus for students; others might have a designated, pre-arranged van driver for a week or so. Our trip to Japan will not be like that, though. We will be *fully* immersed in the cities we'll visit, which means that we'll frequently be on our own, counting on ourselves to figure out how to get here/there by train and bus (usually train). We might make a mistake or two, might have to hurry once/twice to make this or that connection. Then, when



arrive at our various destinations, we will often have to walk a bit. Students, **there will be some walking during our trip to Japan.** You'll never have to walk a thousand miles in a single day or anything crazy, but please bring a good, supportive pair of shoes and a positive mind-set, okay? (It also wouldn't hurt also to pack light, with a suitcase that rolls.)

**Honors LIT 220, “Japanese Literature in Translation”:** Our trip to Japan is linked with an academic course, Honors LIT 220, taught by Professor Andrew Wilson, from Harper's English Department. In order to participate in the Spring, 2025 study-abroad trip to Japan, you do have to enroll in Honors LIT 220, which is scheduled to meet on Tuesdays/Thursdays in the coming spring, 12:30 to 1:45 p.m., and which will begin meeting on Tuesday, February 11, 2025 (no class sessions through the month of January or in the very early days of February). As you can tell from the title, LIT 220 surveys **English-language translations** of Japanese poetry, fiction, and nonfiction: absolutely no speaking or reading knowledge of Japanese is required, and no background knowledge of Japan is required. The course also looks briefly at Noh drama and a selection or two from Japanese cinema — perhaps Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru* or Studio Ghibli's *Grave of the Fireflies*. For the most part, LIT 220 emphasizes the modern period (the 20th and 21st Centuries), though a few pre-modern works will be examined in order to understand contemporary Japan's link to the past. Students will read some amazing things: a small, extraordinary novel by Yasunari Kawabata (one of Japan's Nobel winners); stories by the great Haruki Murakami (alive and well and a recent Nobel finalist); a new-ish pocket-sized novel by Sayaka Murata, one of Japan's many emerging female writers — and obviously our week in Japan will crystallize the many aesthetics and issues we'll address in our sessions on Harper's campus. Our overall aim is to present each enrollee with the most amazing, life-changing inter-cultural experience we possibly can.

### **The Honors Component:**

Finally, permit us to repeat something important: if you are curious and serious about our Spring, 2025 study-abroad trip to Japan, but you are not yet a member of the college's Honors Program, please don't let this auto-stop you from pursuing your interest. Feel entirely free, *please*, to contact Professor Wilson ([awilson@harpercollege.edu](mailto:awilson@harpercollege.edu)) or Professor Bell ([jbelle@harpercollege.edu](mailto:jbelle@harpercollege.edu)); you are also encouraged to reach out to Harper's Honors Program Co-Coordinators, Professor Maggie McKinley ([mmckinle@harpercollege.edu](mailto:mmckinle@harpercollege.edu)) and/or Professor Alicia Tomasian ([atomasia@harpercollege.edu](mailto:atomasia@harpercollege.edu)).

You should know, too, that if you do apply to our Honors Program, and if you are accepted, you are **not** required thereafter to take Honors course-work beyond the above-mentioned Honors LIT 220 class; moreover, you would **not** be obligated to attend the program's weekly meetings, the program's cultural and service outings, etc., even though these are educational and wonderful (and often fun besides). In other words, it **is** okay to a) apply to and join the Honors Program, and then b) only enroll in Honors LIT 220 and participate in the spring, '25 Japan trip.

To access the online Honors Program application form, please click here:

<https://www.harpercollege.edu/honors/index.php>

And students, one more thing . . . Professor Wilson, the lead faculty member for the spring, 2025 Japan trip, **is** on campus this fall and **is** available for drop-in conversations (no appointment needed) on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 11 a.m. to about 12:15 or 12:20 p.m. Professor Wilson's office is room D-151a, about 15 seconds from Harper's Starbucks.

## **Faculty Leaders**

Andrew Wilson is a full-time Professor of English and ESL at Harper, where he has taught English, Literature, Humanities, and ESL courses since the mid/late 1990s. He has a PhD in English from Kent State University, an MA in English from Ohio University, an MA in Linguistics from Northeastern Illinois University, a BA and BS in English and English Education (respectively) from Bowling Green State University. He has a life-long passion for Japanese literature and has twice before brought Harper students to Japan: once in 2007, then again in 2014. He has served as the English Department's Co-Chair and also served for many years (2002 to 2013) as the Coordinator of Harper's outstanding Honors Program.

Jennifer E. Bell is a full-time professor of Adult Education (English Literacy Acquisition, High School Equivalency Language Arts, and College and Career Readiness) at Harper, where she has taught at both the main campus and community sites for 24 years. Jennifer has an EdD in Community College Leadership from Ferris State University, an MA in TESOL/Applied Linguistics from the University of IL at Chicago, and a BA in General Studies in the Humanities from the University of Chicago. Jennifer has visited Japan twice for short vacations and enjoys Japanese literature, especially Murakami! Having participated herself as a year-long exchange student in Germany, a study abroad adult student in Finland, and a virtual exchange professor with Costa Rica, she is a firm believer in study abroad experiences for all community college students!



**Price:** Approximately \$3,500 to \$3,900 — includes Harper tuition; airfare; one week of accommodations in double and/or triple rooms, with breakfast included each day; a few dinners; the all-important Japan Rail (“bullet-train”) Pass, which will take us from city to city in Japan; museum tickets and all pre-arranged tours.

Students should plan to bring adequate spending money for lunches, dinners, souvenirs, local train/subway fare, and any activities they wish to do on their own. The amount varies by student; speak with Prof. Wilson and/or Prof. Bell if you have questions about spending money.

#### PROGRAM COST BREAKDOWN

Airfare	\$1,775 (approx.)
Accommodations and other on-the-ground costs	\$2,300 (approx.)
Japan Rail (“bullet-train”) Pass	\$355 (current cost of a 7-day JR Pass)
Tuition for Honors LIT 220	\$415.50
Sub-Total	\$4,845
Honors Program Contribution per Student	-\$1,000
<b>Estimated Total per Student</b>	<b>\$3,845</b>



**Note regarding tuition for Honors LIT 220:** Since each participant will sign up for Honors LIT 220 on his/her/their own, NOT through Harper's Office of International Education, the actual per-student cost to the OIE will be approximately **\$3,500** ( $\$3,845 - \$415.50 = \$3429.50$ ). That number, \$3,500, could change (up or down), but it is indeed a fair, carefully considered figure.

The payment schedule for that amount, \$3,500, is as follows:

**1st payment:** \$500 Deposit, due with application on November 1, 2024.

**2nd payment:** \$1,500 due on December 1, 2024

**Final payment:** \$1,500, due on January 1, 2025 (this payment is subject to change, should any of the above-mentioned costs fluctuate).