



**Philosophy 2226F (570)**  
**INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY**  
**Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

**Instructor:** S. Lofts  
**Email:** slofts@uwo.ca

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**Course Information**

**Calendar Description:**

An introduction to the key concepts and issues in contemporary Japanese Thought and the influence of Buddhism and Shinto on Japanese philosophy. Students will investigate questions concerning the self, metaphysics, aesthetics, and ethics from the perspective of classical and contemporary Japanese thinkers. No previous knowledge of philosophy assumed.

**Extra Information:** 3 hours, 0.5 course.

**Course Weight:** 0.50  
**Breadth:** Category B  
**Subject Code:** PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

King's University College  
University of Western Ontario  
Department of Philosophy  
PHILOSOP2226F — Introduction to Japanese Philosophy

**Instructor:** Dr. Stephen Lofts  
**Email:** slofts@uwo.ca  
**Office Hours:** by appointment  
**Mode of Instruction:** In-person  
**Prerequisites:** None

## DESCRIPTION

This course offers a concise introduction to Japanese philosophy.

The course has three main objectives:

1. To familiarize students with some of the central questions, ideas, and figures of modern and contemporary philosophy.
2. To develop sound and critical reasoning skills when analysing philosophical arguments and positions.
3. To help develop students' own philosophical positions and questions by responding to the views of the philosophers discussed.

## Required Texts:

- All readings will be posted on the OWL website.

## Course Requirements and Due Dates:

- **Presence and Participation (10%)**
- **Final Exam (60%)** – Date to be determined by Registrar
- **Research Paper (30%)** – Due Monday, December 1; submit through the course website as a Word document.
  - **IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS TO BE READ BEFORE YOU WRITE!!!!**
  - Your paper **MUST** be: 3000-3500 words, not including bibliography and footnotes.
  - Your paper **MUST** have a title, introduction, and conclusion.
  - Your paper **MUST** be on **ONE** of the authors studied in this course and **MUST** focus on the texts we have used.
  - Your paper **MUST** demonstrate a close and critical engagement with the text and avoid general statements about the author's philosophy.
  - You **MUST** use no less than **THREE** scholarly articles published in a peer-reviewed Journal OR chapters published in a peer-reviewed Press.
  - You **MUST** effectively integrate at least one citation from each of these works.
  - There will be deductions up to 10% of the grade for spelling, grammar, and formal requirements (title, page numbers, proper footnoting, word limit, and for each of the **MUST** requirements stated above).

- ATTENTION: AI is very good at certain things, but it isn't good at other things.
  - I will spot-check citations; if they do not exist in the work you cite, on the page you cite, a 15% grade deduction will be applied.
  - If I see inconsistent translations for technical terms, 5% grade deduction will be applied.
  - If you cite a text that has not been translated into English and do not provide a reference for where you got this, 5% grade deduction will be applied.

### **Extensions for Research Paper:**

- There are NO extensions for the Research Paper. Only extensions recommended by the ADO will be accommodated. Please do not even ask.

### **Classroom Policies:**

- Be respectful of others and their views. You can disagree with a position, but do so respectfully.
- No phone use is permitted. If someone is using a phone, the lecture will stop.
- Use of laptops for taking notes is permitted, but watching movies, doing emails, etc., is not. If it is clear that this is happening, you will be asked to stop using your laptop.

### **Missed classes:**

- If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes from a fellow student. Please do not write me to ask what you missed.
- Any and all PowerPoints are for class use only. They will not be posted on the Website nor provided afterwards.

### **Communications:**

- I will generally respond to emails within 48 hours. I do not respond to emails on the weekend or right before a test.
- Emails that are not formal and respectful will be deleted.

### **Makeup exams:**

- If (when) you miss one of the first two exams, a makeup exam will be automatically submitted. The details of the makeup date will be sent out in a general email.
- If it is the final exam, you will have to deal with the Dean's office to get permission to write the makeup. There is no need to contact me, as I will just say (whatever the reason) that you should speak with the Dean's office.

## Course Readings

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### TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

**Tuesday, September 9**—Japanese Philosophy and the Historical Context of the Kyoto School.

- Highly Recommended:
  - Nishida, "The Forms of Culture of the Classical Periods of East and West Seen from a Metaphysical Perspective."
  - Bret Davis, "What Is Japanese Philosophy?," Oxford Handbook of Japanese Philosophy.

**Tuesday, September 16**—NISHIDA Kitarō 西田 幾多郎 (1870-1945)

- Required: Nishida, "Pure Experience"
- Highly Recommended: Hitoshi Minobe, 西田の哲学における場所と時 [Places and times in Nishida's philosophy]

**Tuesday, September 23**—NISHIDA Kitarō 西田 幾多郎 (1870-1945)

- Required: Nishida "Basho"

**Tuesday, September 30**—No class

**Tuesday, October 7**—Tanabe Hajime 田辺 元 (1885-1962)

- Required: Tanabe, "Logic of the Specific"
- Required: Tanabe, "Clarifying the Logic of the Species"
- Recommended: Nakaoka Narifumi, What Does Absolute Negation Differentiate?

**Tuesday, October 14**—WATSUJI Tetsurō 和辻 哲郎 (1889–1960)

- Watsuji, Fūdo

**Tuesday, October 21**—Tosaka Jun 戸坂 潤 (1900-1945)

- Tosaka, "The Principle of Everydayness and Historical Time"

**Tuesday, October 28**—Tosaka Jun 戸坂 潤 (1900-1945)

- Tosaka, "Film as the Reproduction of the Present" & "Film Art and Film"

**Tuesday, November 4**—READING WEEK

**Tuesday, November 11**—NAKAI Masakazu (中井正一, 1900-1952)

- Nakai, "Utsusu—To Transfer-Mirror"

- Nakai, "The Anxiety of Painting"
- Nakai, "The meaning of 'Seeing'"

**Tuesday, November 18**—NISHITANI Keiji (西谷 啓治, 1900-1990)

- Nishitani, "Emptiness and Sameness"

**Tuesday, November 25**—NISHITANI Keiji (西谷 啓治, 1900-1990)

- Nishitani, "Emptiness and Sameness"

**Tuesday, December 2**—UEDA Shizuteru (上田閑照) – Zen & Language

- Ueda, "Language in a Twofold World"
- Ueda, "Silence and Words in Zen Buddhism"

**Tuesday, December 9**—THIS REVIEW AND OPEN DISCUSSION CLASS WILL BE HELD ONLINE: THE ZOOM CONNECTION WILL BE HERE

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
**GENERAL COURSE POLICIES**  
**2025-2026**

**1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences**

**Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)**

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

**Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses\\_enrollment/exams\\_and\\_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf](https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

**Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under Special Examinations).

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

## **2. Support Services**

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University

College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-supportservices/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:  
[https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)

Academic Support Services at King's University College:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

### **GBSV Support:**

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing [Care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:Care@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safecampus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

### **3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

### **4. Statement on Academic Offences**

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammarchecking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

### **5. Copyright of Course Material**

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

### **6. Use of Recordings**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

### **7. Policy on Attendance**

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.