



# Broad College of Business

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

### Department of Marketing

IBUS 393: Business and Culture in Japan Study Abroad Program

Spring 2026 Syllabus

Instructor

<b>Instructor:</b> Stacy Clause
Office hours: I am happy to meet with you as needed. As I am based in Japan, there is a 12 -13-hour time difference, early mornings or evenings in Michigan are best. Email me with a few times and we can arrange to meet on ZOOM.
E-mail: <a href="mailto:clausest@msu.edu">clausest@msu.edu</a>

Instructor Introduction:

Stacy has assisted the Business and Culture in Japan Program for two years, and led the program last year. She has also led Japanese students on study abroad to Sydney, Australia. She has been an instructor in Education at a private university in Takasaki, Japan for over 25 years.

Course Information

Course Description and Overview:

This course is a key component of the Business in Japan study abroad experience. It forms the basis of your understanding and learning in Japan, providing you with the background knowledge and context to derive the most benefit from your visit to Japan.

This course will provide you with an understanding of cross-the cultural study of business decisions, markets and institutions. It covers functional aspects of business operations that organizations in Japan tackle internationally and in locus. We will cover such topics as globalization, urbanization, and demographics and how these trends are impacting the Japanese business environment.

The course is a hybrid of in-class lectures, zoom and in-country site visits. The class materials and activities are designed for you to gain an understanding of how Japanese culture (and business culture) reflect the tensions of tradition and modernity, as well as what this experience can teach us about our own cultural practices and beliefs. Thus, the pre-departure lectures focus on the cultural beliefs and ideas that guide business practices. Site visits are curated guest lectures examining critical areas by business leaders in Japan today. This course will also require and develop writing in both narrative (descriptively explaining your experiences in Japan) and analytical (what you learned and how this new knowledge applies to your particular business interests).

## Course Materials:

### 1. Course Readings on Japan:

- a. NYT articles available through student NYT accounts, select chapters (online in D2L)
- b. *The Sushi Economy: Globalization and the Making of a Modern Delicacy* by Sasha Issenberg ISBN-13: 978-1592403639

### 2. Film (available for rent online 3-4 dollars each)

- *Jiro Dreams of Sushi (2011)* David Gelb.
- *Perfect Days (2023)* Wim Wenders.

## Course Objectives:

This course will allow students to gain an understanding of business practices in Japan, including implications of culture on supply chains, strategy, marketing and other aspects of the business environment. After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the unique opportunities and challenges of entering and operating a business in Japan.
- Understand the relationship between Japan's island geography, its homogeneous population, and its unique culture.
- Discuss the overall business environment in Japan today, including such areas as trade, demographics, and workplace attitudes.
- Appreciate the tensions between traditional cultural concepts and both global and internal pressures to adapt to a changing world.

Course objectives will be met through active and engaged participation, throughout the program, as well as the thoughtful completion of all course readings, assignments, and projects. This program includes no quizzes or examinations, but requires careful reflection of readings, lectures, and professional visits in the completion of course requirements.

Students will meet the course objectives through the following actions:

- Attending all class sessions and activities in East Lansing, online and in Tokyo.
- Completing all assigned readings/viewings prior to class (and be prepared to discuss), and all assignments by the due date.
- Participate in classroom discussions and actively engage with all professional visits in Japan.

## Course Outline/Schedule

The table below describes the weekly activities including date, topic, readings, activities, and due date. The first column describes the week. The second column describes the topic. The third column describes the readings. The fourth column describes any assignments that are due. **All readings/assigned watching must be completed prior to class.**

Please note that site visits/readings are subject to change based on the availability of our partners in Japan.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading discussion/Activities</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
January 28th (W) 6:45-9:00pm <b>In person</b>	Introduction and program information, assignment of site visit presentations Culture- Iceberg and Cultural toolkit models	-Personal Cultural Toolkit readings -Review Study Abroad Orientation (online) Be sure to understand iceberg model in the orientation. Key cultural concepts/double entry notebook	<b>Office of Education Abroad online orientation/Allergy form for hotel</b> Personal toolkit assessment paper
February 4 <sup>th</sup> (W) 6:45-9:00pm <b>ZOOM</b>	Globalization and business environment today	The Sushi Economy discussion	Reflection 1 on Sushi economy
February 11 <sup>th</sup> (W) 6:45-9:00 <b>ZOOM</b>	Japanese Business Cultural concepts from NYT readings Tokyo the City	NYT readings D2L/movie discussion shokunin, changing traditions, corporate longevity, what the west can learn, how toilets got a starring role in a movie	Student presentations: the city
February 18 <sup>th</sup> (W) 6:45-9:00 <b>IN PERSON</b>	Challenges in the Japanese Business environment today About Kamakura	NYT readings in D2L challenges- women overwork, immigrant labor, aging society, labor shortages	Student presentations: site visits Reflection 2 on Cultural Concepts
Feb. 27 (F)	Depart for Japan!	Arrive February 28 <sup>th</sup> (Sat)/Hotel briefing 8 P.M.)	
March 1 (Sun)	Cultural Visit: Kamakura	Day trip outside of Tokyo	
March 2 (M)	Business Visits	(usually on morning and one afternoon)	
March 3 (T)	Business Visits	TBA Izakaya dinner (or other evening TBA)	
March 4 (W)	Morning Business Visit		
March 5 (Th)	Business Visits		
March 6 (F)	Business Visits	Reception (evening)	Cultural observations of business in Japan portfolio/notebook (presentation)
March 7 (Sa)	Cultural Visit to Zojoji Temple/ Tokyo Tower Afternoon: Depart for U.S. (Arrive same day)		
March 9 (M) OR March 20 (Tu)	Business College Debriefing (online)	Choose ONE online session to participate in	

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading discussion/Activities</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
OR March 21 (W)			
March 11 (W) 6:45-9:00pm	Final online meeting	Presentations of cultural business observations	
March 16 (M)			<b>Due by 5:00pm:</b> Corporate Site Visit Summary Paper

### Grading Policy

Important note on grades: **You must complete the Office of Education Abroad online orientation prior to start of first class meeting.** Failure to do so will result in an automatic half-point reduction in the final grade (i.e., 4.0 to 3.5).

Unless otherwise noted, assignments are double-spaced, 12-pt, and 1-inch margins. No late work will be accepted.

### Grade Dissemination:

Usually assignments are graded in 7 to 10 days. Students may contact me to discuss grades on any assignment at any point during the program.

### Graded Course Activities:

Here are the graded course activities including points and activity description.

Percentage of Final Grade	Total Points Possible	Description
One half letter grade		<b>Office of Education Abroad online orientation completed before class.</b> This course contains essential MSU policy information. If you do not complete this before class starts, your grade will be lowered one half letter grade.
10	20	<b>Personal Cultural Profile.</b> Complete all <i>Cultural Analysis Toolkit</i> self-assessments (Behaviors & Attitudes section) and write 2-3 pages on what this tells you about yourself, what you expect to encounter in Japan based on your previous knowledge, what you've heard about the country, any readings you've done for class, etc. and in what ways you expect to be most similar to or different from Japanese culture. <u>Discuss at least 4 dimensions.</u>
10	20	<b>Corporate visit leadership activities.</b> 1. In pairs, students will prepare a 5-7-minute presentation with visuals for the class for each of the corporate visits predeparture. This presentation should include relevant business profiles, photos (if possible) where the visit will take place. 2. On the site visit day, students will give a 2-minute reminder briefing on the bus. 4. Provide a five-minute explanation of recommended places in Tokyo- museums, areas, food, etc. 4. Students will also be irresponsible for presenting a gift and a thank you note.
10	20	<b>Business Culture observation notebook and presentation.</b> Students will assemble and <b>present</b> about business cultural practices observed in Japan <b>during the trip</b> (see handout). This is part of the process work for your final paper. Turn in your notes and PowerPoint presentation on March 6, the final day of the trip.
10	20	<b>Reflection 1</b> (500 words)/ Sushi economy. In order to prepare for a class discussion, write 500 words paper describing a cultural idea using the iceberg or 8-dimension terms. What about his description was compelling, honest or unique? What concrete details made his writing vivid? What is surprising to you about the business elements described in this book so far? What is the basic formula for this type of business writing?
10	20	<b>Reflection 2</b> (500 words)/NYT Readings In order to prepare for a class discussion, write 500 words about the NYT readings/Film. what challenges might foreign businesses face in understanding these ideas? How would knowing these trends and challenges add to your understanding as a business professional? Given what you have learned so far in other coursework, how do these articles add to your understanding?
25	50	<b>Corporate Site Visit Summary.</b> For this summary, you will need to select at least four of the corporate site visits from our time in Japan and prepare a paper (6-8 pages, double spaced, 12 point) comparing and contrasting what you learned at a particular site in Japan, as well as material from lectures and readings. This summary is a way for you to tie your learning at the site visits together. <i>Your notebook and presentation during the trip significantly contribute to this project.</i> How did the practices of the company fit with your

		understanding of international business/marketing practices as described by our guest lecturers or the course readings? In what ways do their practices <i>differ</i> from elements of Japanese culture that you read or knew about? What advice or challenges were discussed? Students should also refer back to the Cultural Analysis Toolkit, readings, and lectures to answer these questions. See the writing rubric in this syllabus.
25	50	<b>Attendance, Participation, and Comportment.</b> Participation is extremely important. Attendance at ALL class meetings, cultural activities, and site visits is mandatory as these provide hands-on experience that make study abroad a valuable education experience. This class will only succeed if everyone actively participates in the discussions. In Japan, as a culture that values group harmony, we represent the Broad school. Please see the rubric below for more details on how this grade is determined.
100	200	

#### Grading Scale:

The table below describes the relationships between final course grade and total points earned. The first column is the final grade. The second column describes the point range of that grade.

Grade	Points
4.0	200-180
3.5	179-170
3.0	169-160
2.5	159-150
2.0	149-140
1.5	139-130

### Attendance, Participation, and Comportment Rubric:

<b>Excellent (46-50 points)</b>	<b>Good (31-45 points)</b>	<b>Satisfactory (21-30 points)</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory (20-0 points)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attends all program activities. Does not come late or leave early.</li> <li>- Always well prepared for class. It is evident all readings have been completed prior to class.</li> <li>- Exhibits positive attitude toward program activities and participants.</li> <li>- Consistently contributes to class discussions and activities in a meaningful way.</li> <li>- Exhibits proper engagement during all site visits. Takes notes and asks questions as appropriate.</li> <li>- <b>Does not use electronic devices in class or during program activities.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation is almost as good as a student receiving an excellent but one or two elements are not quite up to excellent level.</li> <li>- For example, a student receiving "good" may miss 1-2 class sessions, arrive late for class or group activities or occasionally not participate actively in discussion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation is generally similar to one receiving an unsatisfactory rating, but there are one or two elements which are relatively well done.</li> <li>- For example, the student could participate in class activities, but because they arrive late and/or are not fully prepared, they are not able to participate at the same level as a student receiving an excellent or good rating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Misses more than 3 classes <b>or</b> is habitually late/leaves early.</li> <li>- Usually not prepared for class. Evident that readings have not been completed prior to class.</li> <li>- Exhibits a negative attitude toward course, alumni or hosts, faculty, staff, or fellow students.</li> <li>- Does not contribute to discussions or in-class activities.</li> <li>- Misses ANY site visits in Japan, falls asleep or exhibits rude behavior toward hosts on ANY site visit. <b>This includes using electronic devices (cell phone, ipad, ipod, etc.) during site visits.</b></li> <li>- <b>Regularly/inappropriately uses electronic devices in class or during program activities.</b></li> </ul>

### Other Course Policies

The nature of education abroad demands flexibility. Thus, the dates and assignments are tentative and can be changed at the discretion of the professor or to meet the needs of our corporate and alumni hosts in Japan. All changes will be communicated to students in class or via email. Students are responsible for checking email regularly throughout the program, as it will be our primary means of communication outside of class.

**Attendance Policy:**

You must participate in all required group activities in Japan unless you are genuinely ill. Absences due to staying up late or alcohol consumption will not be excused.

Failure to attend/being late to any required session will result in the loss of points (based on a percentage of time missed). Academic courses take precedence over extracurricular activities. If you are ill, contact Stacy or Natalie as soon as possible.

**Site visits:** You must take pen-and-paper notes during sessions on campus and during all business and cultural site visits and guest lectures, while on site in Japan. Not taking notes during a guest lecture or a site visit results in a loss of participation points. Cell phones or other electronic devices are strictly prohibited and **MUST BE STOWED** in a pocket or bag for the duration of the class or visit. Site visits/cultural activities are the most important component of the participation grade. **If you do not consistently and appropriately engage during site visits, it will not be possible to earn all participation points.**

**Tardiness: You must be on time.** Even if you are only a few minutes late, you will lose points for class participation for each incident. This is very important when we are preparing to leave on group transportation while in Japan.

Students' behavior reflects on Michigan State University. Therefore, **students must behave respectfully toward the host culture, its values, language, beliefs, and customs at all times**. Students must also be properly attired for all site visits. **For professional site visits**, proper, business professional attire for men includes a shirt and tie (jacket optional), dress pants and belt, dress shoes and socks. For women, business professional attire includes dress pants and blouse, skirt and blouse, or nice dress, with dress shoes (pantyhose/tights are optional). No tattoos can be showing (please cover). Please pack your carryon with a suitable change of clothes for a site visit in case of mishandled luggage. Questions to hosts are always encouraged, but be respectful if host declines to answer.

**Late Work Policy:** No late work will be accepted.

**Academic Honesty:**

All students will abide by the Eli Broad College of Business Honor Code. Please go to the following website and read it carefully: <https://broad.msu.edu/masters/mba/student-life/honor-code/>

**AI policy /Writing evaluation**

Throughout this course, we will examine different ways of presenting business ideas in written form, including personal narratives, news, and case studies to further develop our understanding of “the business” of presenting business. As you examine each of these genres, you will nurture your own writing skills with visual presentations and longer written work. In other words, this class has writing. AI policy is such that it may be used in a limited capacity to assist with grammar, editing and clarity. It should not be used for idea generation or final content creation. Correct acknowledgement required.

4.0 Writing exhibits originality and specificity from site visits and quotes from guest speakers, explores in-depth the connections between cultural themes and practices observed. Makes unique and interesting connections between ideas, shows creative organization and spark.



3.5 Writing shows a good grasp of cultural themes but has only few general observations from the field. Although writing shows some insight, sometimes draws on bland generalizations to make one or two original points.

3.0 Relies heavily on generally available knowledge and shows little insight from experience. Organizationally humdrum and shows little originality or understanding of cultural knowledge gained.

2.5 Writings addresses general themes from generally available knowledge and does not reflect an in-depth personal knowledge gained from site visits or attending lectures.