

565:103 Introduction to Japanese Writing

Course description:

Introduction to Japanese Writing offers opportunities for students to understand and appreciate the history, types, and styles of Japanese writing systems. This course trains students in the art of Japanese writing in pen and brush, with special focus on the extensive practice in Japanese brush calligraphy. Emphasis is placed on spiritual concentration, the philosophy of shodoo, and zen calligraphy.

Note: This is a studio class where students are expected to engage in repeated practice of the art of Japanese calligraphy. Only concentrated and repeated practice will result in improvement of one's skill in writing. During class, please keep quiet to maintain a state of calmness and harmony. Given that only self-discipline leads to a state of zen meditation through calligraphy, students are encouraged to practice outside of class.

Goals/outcome of the course:

1. Learn the history and forms of the Japanese writing system.
2. Acquire pen writing 硬筆 skills in an aesthetic style, with correct punctuation.
3. Understand and appreciate the different brush writing protocols (hiragana ひらがな and kanji kaisho and gyoosho 漢字 楷書、行書) of Japanese calligraphy.
4. Experience the body-mind connection in the spirit of zen brush calligraphy.
5. Achieve an introductory level of calligraphy art 書道.
6. Create elementary Japanese writing with the instructor's guidance and present it in brush writing.

Special reading assignment:

Zen in the Art of Archery. By Eugen Herrigel. New York: Vintage Books, 1971 [1953].

Grading:

Achievement levels are assessed based on attendance, evaluation of extensive student writing and calligraphy submissions as well as a reading report.

NOTE: A detailed syllabus is distributed to enrolled students.

