

The Program

Person and Place in Japan

Japan, with the second-largest economy and 10th-largest population in the world, commands our attention as a post-industrial society that, intriguingly, operates on many non-Western assumptions.

Bates Fall Semester Abroad 2007, *Person and Place in Japan*, offers both currently enrolled students and entering first-year students a chance to develop a critical and personal sense of Japan through a study of Japanese language, culture, psychology and environment. Based in the vibrant, culturally rich city of Kanazawa on Japan's western coast, the program includes travel to Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima, as well as hiking trips to protected mountain areas and along Ishikawa's rugged Noto peninsula. It is anticipated that this will be most participants' first exposure to Asia and Japan: *no prior knowledge of Japanese language or culture is required.*

Beginning in late August, students on the program will participate in a one-week orientation program on the Bates campus. The orientation session gives students a chance to get acquainted, provides them with information on social conditions in Japan, teaches some basic sentence patterns and phrases in Japanese, and prepares them to participate in Japanese society.

Through the rest of the fall, students continue language instruction in Kanazawa at the Ishikawa Japanese Studies Center at the level that best suits their proficiency, and take two courses taught by Bates faculty in English. All courses will be held at the Ishikawa International Exchange Center in the heart of the city.

Kanazawa, capital of Ishikawa Prefecture, has a population of almost half a million people and has functioned as a center for visual, literary and religious culture since its founding as a castle town in the mid-1500s. When the name Kanazawa is mentioned, many Japanese think first of the city's celebrated landscape garden, the Kenrokuen, 26 acres of human-designed mountains, winding streams, ponds and waterfalls.

But Kanazawa is also a city of arts and entertainment. The three traditional geisha districts each host an array of tea houses, restaurants and boutiques, while downtown malls are gathering spots for the city's young people and serve as performance sites for popular amateur theater on weekends. Numerous hot springs and the snowy peaks of the Hakusan (White Mountain) National Park are a short trip from the city as are the famed beaches of the Noto Peninsula. Japan's high-speed trains bring other metropolitan areas close; Osaka is two and a half hours from Kanazawa and Tokyo can be reached in just under four hours. Check the city of Kanazawa's Web site, www.city.kanazawa.ishikawa.jp/index_e.html, to learn more about this exciting location.



Photo by Sarah Strong, Bates FSA location in downtown Kanazawa

After an initial stay in a well-appointed youth hostel, students will move to a homestay in the Kanazawa area. This will enable them to experience firsthand the daily routines and periodic celebrations of contemporary Japanese family life. In addition, students will take field trips to various temples, gardens and other cultural sites and events within the area.

The Courses

Cultural Psychology — Helen C. Boucher

Until recently, a strong assumption of universality has marked the history of psychological theory and research. Psychologists have long assumed that the processes they were investigating, in primarily Western cultural contexts such as in the United States, would manifest themselves similarly everywhere else. Only in the past 20 years has there been an appreciation of the substantial differences in thought, motivation, emotion and behavior that characterize different cultural groups. This course will survey the field of cultural psychology, which examines the dynamic interplay between human culture and psyche, with a particular focus on Japanese culture. We will also examine the various ways that psychologists define culture, survey the methods cultural psychologists use to collect and evaluate data, cultivate the capacity to think critically about psychological findings pertaining to culture, and develop an appreciation of both human diversity and commonality.

We suggest that students interested in Bates Fall Semester Abroad 2007 take Psychology 101 in either fall 2006 or winter 2007 in preparation for this course.

Nature and Environment in Japan — Sarah M. Strong

One of the puzzles of modern Japan has been the coexistence of traditional and intensely held convictions of

the aesthetic and spiritual value of nature together with an acceptance of urban and industrial development that appears to place the very survival of the natural environment at risk. This course examines the way nature is constructed and valued in traditional literature, landscape gardens and selected religious texts from the Zen tradition. It goes on to investigate the state of nature in contemporary Japan, the status of the environmental movement, and the way in which the nature aesthetic is invoked, revised or simply disregarded amidst the pressures and demands of technology and the modern state. Field trips in and around Kanazawa to gardens, temples, literary sites and national parks are important components of the course.

Intensive Japanese Language Courses

Taught at the novice, intermediate or advanced level depending on the student's individual background, these courses are designed to help all program participants better understand and communicate with people in their surrounding culture. All courses will work toward a rapid improvement in comprehension, speaking, reading and writing skills. Language courses will be taught by native speaking instructors trained at the Ishikawa Japanese Studies Center.

The Faculty

Helen Boucher is an assistant professor of psychology now entering her third year at Bates. In her research she examines the differences in self-knowledge and self-evaluation that characterize Western (particularly American) and East Asian (particularly Chinese and Japanese) cultural groups. She has spent time in Beijing and Tokyo for her research and is currently investigating cultural differences in implicit (i.e., unconscious) forms of self-evaluation.

Sarah Strong is a professor of Japanese language and literature. In addition to leading three previous fall semester trips to Japan, she has spent extended periods of time doing research and residing in Tokyo, Kyoto, Iwate Prefecture and Hokkaido. She has also published translations and studies on topics ranging from medieval tales to the Buddhist-influenced poems and stories of Miyazawa Kenji. Her current research is on the Ainu writer Chiri Yukie.

Travel

Travel within Japan is an integral part of the program's goal of offering students a chance to encounter Japan as a complex and varied social and physical environment. As such, plans are being made for a series of excursions including:

a week-long trip to the Kansai area, including the historic city of Kyoto, and to Hiroshima and Miyajima.

