

**EALC 380: CULTURAL TOPICS IN EAST ASIAN LITERATURE
FROM THE AESTHETICS OF MINDFULNESS TO MINIMALISM**

4 UNITS/SPRING 2018/WEDNESDAYS 2:00-4:50/LOCATION THH 106

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And Japan is bigger than Tokyo. And even bigger than Japan ... even bigger than Japan, surely, is the inside of your head. Don't surrender yourself—not to Japan, not to anything. --Natsume SŌSEKI, *Sanshirō* (1908)

You may think I'm small, but I have a universe in my head. --Yoko ONO

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course examines the engagement of Japanese philosophy and aesthetics in modern and contemporary literary classics (poetry, short stories, and novels) and their influence on contemporary American culture across the 20th century and into the 21st century. We will consider the topic of cultural aesthetics—with specific attention to the transnational migration and global adaptation of cultural ideas outside the country in which they were conceived—and the permeability of aesthetic principles and their iteration in other related art forms: film, painting, architectural design, interior design, and garden design. The class will primarily address Japanese examples, but students with an interest in Korea and China are strongly encouraged in their final projects to explore instances of Korean and Chinese aesthetic ideas that are similarly transformed and adopted. Aesthetic ideas covered include: mindfulness (*shōnen*), *mono no aware* (pathos of things), *wabi sabi* (subdued, austere beauty/rustic patina), *yūgen* (mysterious grace), *iki* (refined style), *kire* (cutting/less is more), *bushidō* (way of the warrior and death), *mottainai* (pity to waste), and minimalism (*ma*). Readings will include works of classic, modern, and contemporary Japanese literature, read alongside texts such as *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (1974), 2017 Nobel-prize winning Kazuo ISHIGURO's *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), and best sellers such as *Mottainai Grandma* (2004), *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers* (2008), KONDŌ Marie's *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Letting Go* (2014), and *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life* (2017). This class includes 3 class trips: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Schindler House, and the Japanese Garden at The Huntington.

*All readings will be in English. Knowledge of an East Asian language or a background in East Asian culture is NOT required.

ASSIGNMENTS: Brief one-paragraph weekly reading responses posted to Blackboard, 2 short papers of 3 pages each, and a final 5-page paper and brief presentation (no quizzes or exams).