Background:
This course focuses on (Lady) Murasaki Shikibu’s *The Tale of Genji* (Jp. *Genji Monogatari*, aka *GM*) (an 11th century work often called the world’s first novel, and arguably the world’s most influential book by a single author). *Genji* is outstanding not only in the enjoyment readers find in it (over 1000 years!) but in its cultural influence, its continued literary and cultural status, its uninterrupted importance even though it was written by a woman, its impact on the visual arts, its insightful rendition of life at the Court in the Heian period (794–1185), and its probing of philosophical and psychological issues in the absence of disciplines of philosophy & psychology that could guide such probing.

We begin by briefly exploring three literary precursors: the *Man’yōshū*, *Tales of Ise* (a 10th century collection of poem tales), and *Tosa Diary*, as works that both provide a literary foundation for *Genji* and allow us to appreciate the grandeur of its achievement. Most of the course will focus on *Genji* itself: its literary techniques and accomplishments; its themes of love (fulfilled and unrequited), ambition and frustration, self-discovery and self-formation, etc.; the ways in which Buddhism influences plot and character; and its presentation of aesthetics and varieties of beauty; from time to time we will consider aspects of *GM*’s reception. If time permits, we will examine one or two Noh plays that explore either *GM* or its author. If and only if there is sufficient interest by students, we will explore in the last few weeks some short 20th-century works that rely on *Genji* (by Tanizaki Jun’ichiro and Enchi Fumiko) and/or some of the ways our understanding of *Genji* can be deepened or expanded by theory: narrative, feminist, psychoanalytic, Motoori Norinaga’s views of *Genji*’s importance to Japanese identity, “thing theory,” and/or current thinking about canon creation and national identity. Ideally, our reading of *Genji* and these related works should allow us to look back and reassess our own critical notions, and the assumptions embedded in Western theories of literature—as well as our understanding of our lives and how best to live them.

Course Goals: (Note: these may be rewritten in the next week or two.)

These goals will be used both by the instructor to assess the students, and by the students to assess the instructor.

1. To learn about the aristocratic society of 10th to 14th century Japan.
2. To learn to identify different narrative approaches and techniques, gaining insight into their uses and purposes.
3. To learn the narrative conventions surrounding romantic love in traditional Japan.
4. To learn how gender roles affect(ed) the writing and reading of traditional literature.
5. To compare our own contemporary expectations about literature with expectations traditional readers might have had.
Student Learning Outcomes:

1. The student will be able to describe aspects of aristocratic life in the 10th to 14th centuries in Japan, particularly courtship and practices, education of women, parenting, and Buddhism, both as they existed, and as they were imagined in literature, with attention to the differences between historical description, social criticism, and wishful thinking.
2. The student will be able to classify selected literary readings in terms of their narrative approach by citing evidence from the text.
3. The student will be able to describe narrative and poetic conventions surrounding romantic love in traditional Japan, and map them onto selected readings.
4. The student will be able to identify certain aspects of gender politics in a text through examination of literary style, and characterization.
5. The student will be able to articulate his/her expectations about narratives and recognize their relationship to larger cultural patterns in American literature, music, and film. S/he will be able to map them onto selected Japanese literary works so as to compare them with the expectations traditional Japanese readers may have had.
6. The student will be able to recognize and describe several of the different aesthetics exhibited and described in literary texts of the 10th to 14th centuries: miyabi, aware, wabi, sabi, yugen, etc.

In addition, the following EALL departmental SLOs apply, at least in part, to this course:

1. [SLO5: RESEARCH] Conduct independent research on topics in Japanese literature and/or linguistics, and effectively communicate the results.
2. [SLO7: LITERATURE] Identify and describe major authors, works, features, forms, and styles of Japanese literature, both premodern and modern.
3. [SLO8: LITERATURE] Analyze and interpret works of Japanese poetry, prose, and drama, read both in translation and in the original Japanese, using terms appropriate to each genre.
4. [SLO9: LITERATURE] Situate and evaluate Japanese literature in its social, historical, intellectual, and religious contexts.

Themes:

Students must pick one of the following themes and follow it throughout the course, using it to guide their written assignments and in-class work:

1. Love (fulfilled and unrequited), the course of love in literary Japan
2. Woman as Object / woman as Subject
3. Ambition and frustration Politics / power / status / hierarchy
4. How nature functions in literature
5. Story-telling / Narrative
6. Self-discovery and self-formation, etc.
7. The ways in which Buddhism influences plot and character
8. Aesthetics and varieties of beauty
Grading Criteria:
Grading will be based on class participation (including oral presentations), short written work, a final exam and a final paper. Each of these will count for 25% of the grade. Most graded activities will require that the student demonstrate grasp of one of the above “Course Goals” in the context of her/his chosen theme.

Schedule:
Tuesdays will be discussion of the reading, with student-led discussion and/or presentations, and some close reading of Tales of Genji & other reading.
Thursdays will cover background & general issues, including visual/material culture as appropriate. (This order is reversed the first week.)

Weeks 1 – Introduction to the class, Japanese literature, and The Tale of Genji
Week 2 – early literature: Man’yōshū, Tales of Ise, Tosa Diary; handouts from instructor
Weeks 2-13: Begin reading The Tale of Genji, about 100pp/week, with aid from guide-books and summaries (online, in print) as necessary; prepare to lead discussion (working in small teams) for 2 or 3 of those weeks. THIS IS AN EXPERIMENT—IT’S PROBABLY WAY TOO MUCH READING. We’ll see what we can do, & modify our expectations as necessary.

Weeks 3-4 – Noh theatre, w video, reading, guest lecture by Kenneth Lawrence, Takeda Noh troupe)
Week 4 – Field trip Saturday, Feb. 7 to see Noh with Takeda actors (Orvis Theatre)
Weeks 5 – Reading Atsumori, Zeami (handouts)
Weeks 6-13 – Readings from The Tale of Genji,
Weeks 9-12 – (Optional) Readings from theory: narrative, feminist, psychoanalytic, Motoori Norinaga’s views of Genji’s importance to Japanese identity, “thing theory,” &/or current thinking about canon creation and national identity, to be decided by the class
Weeks 12-14 – (Optional) 20th-century Readings from Tanizaki Jun’ichiro (“As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams”) and/or Enchi Fumiko (Masks)
Weeks 14-16 – Class projects

Required Texts:
Murasaki Shikibu, The Tale of Genji, (Vintage Books, 1985), preferably the Edward Seidensticker translation, but Royall Tyler’s and even Arthur Waley’s are also acceptable for parts.
Various photocopied handouts and online readings: Man’yōshū, Tales of Ise, Tosa Diary, Atsumori, some Noh play(s) based on Genji, selections from theory, including Zeami’s, etc.

Suggested:
Morris, Ivan. The World of the Shining Prince (Penguin)
Mostow, Joshua, and Royall Tyler, trans., The Ise Stories (UH Press, 2010)

On Reserve at Hamilton Library as of January 13, 2015:
Tale of Genji—several translations
World of the Shining Prince, Tales of Ise, Tosa Diary, The Man’yōshū