

A - New Course Proposal V. 7.2022 : Entry # 3628**DEAN Decision**

Approved

Date

02/08/2026

Is this course intracollegiate or intercollegiate?

Intracollegiate

ACADEMIC PROGRAM Decision

Approved

Date

01/15/2026

Type the name of your committee

Study Abroad Committee

SCHOOL EPC Decision

Approved

Date

03/03/2026

GEC Decision

Approved

Date

04/10/2026

APIRC Decision

Approved

Date

04/17/2026

Begin Form**Today's Date**

01/20/2026

Your Name:

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Matthew Mitchell

Your Email:mmitch4@highpoint.edu**Are you a Department Chair?**

No

Department Chair Name

Christopher Franks

Email address of your Department Chaircfranks@highpoint.edu**By checking below, I certify that my department chair has seen and approved the new course that I am proposing.**

Yes

Please select the appropriate school overseeing this proposal:

Humanities and Behavioral Sciences

When should this proposal take effect?

Spring 2027

Information for the Registrar**Choose the department designator from the list below.**

REL

Proposed Course Number?

2049

Is this course cross listed?

No

Does this course replace a current course?

No

What is the title of the new course?

From Shrines to Skylines: Religion and Power in Japan's Urban History

Write the catalog description of your proposed course:

This course introduces students to the development and roles of urban environments in Japan. Religion, politics, economics, and warfare have shaped Japanese cities and impacted the people who live in them. Based in Osaka, this course will explore sites and museums highlighting the city's numerous historical "lives" as well as neighboring Nara (capital during the 8th century), Kyoto

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(capital in the 8th-12th centuries), and Mt. Koya. Students will examine the intersections of religion, politics, power, economics, gender, and geography through primary and secondary sources (in English translation), workshops, and excursions to temples, shrines, and historical sites across the Kansai region. Students will leave this course with a broad understanding of Japan's urban environments throughout history, and the roles of religion and religious sites in shaping those environments.

How many credit hours will this course be?

4

How will the course be graded?

Letter grade

Please select the course repeat option for this course:

Not repeatable for credit

What is the offering cycle for this course?

Alternate years

Does your course have any prerequisites?

No

Is this new course being proposed because of a new or revised major or minor proposal?

no

Gen Ed and Academic Programs**Is this course part of Gen Ed?**

- Yes

Does your course count in the general education core (one of the core classes that cannot be double-dipped in your major or minor)?

Ethical Reasoning and Religious Traditions [ETRLT]

Is there a second field in the general education core that the course qualifies for?

Humanities [HUMAN]

Does your course count in any general education categories that can be double-dipped in the core or in a major/minor?

- Experiential Learning

Does this course count towards a major or a minor?

Yes

Please list the Major / Minor and if it is Required or Elective

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REL major - elective / REL minor - elective

Is this course part of an academic program?

- Study Abroad

Have you received approval from the appropriate academic program committee to move forward with this proposal?

Yes

Does this course include any community engagement?

No

Does this course participate in the GoGlobal Program?

Yes

Information for Curriculum Review**Rationale and evidence for new course's consistency with departmental mission:**

Increase in student engagement in courses on Asia. Request for more experiential learning courses for religion majors and that can fulfill Gen Eds. Discussion with Jeff Palis in Global Education.

List all student learning outcomes for this course.

Study Abroad Outcomes:

SELF-AWARENESS: Students will describe and analyze how their own worldview, including knowledge, norms, and value systems, is impacted by regional and/or cultural origin and how meaningful engagement with Japanese culture, religion, and history can impact their own worldview.

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING: Students will engage Japanese cultures, histories, and worldviews, and discuss knowledge, norms, and value systems. Students will gain this understanding of Japanese culture, religion, and history through a lens of ethnography (learning from people) and history (learning from the past), as opposed to ethnocentrism (contrasting people and cultures from a narrow perspective).

SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE: Students will consider and discuss how the ideas, norms, and values of Japan have been influenced over time by religious, political, economic, social, and/or environmental systems. Furthermore, students will discuss how power, privilege, and difference have been a part of those systems and how they have impacted people's lives.

GLOBAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS: Students will analyze and explain Japan's relationships between local, regional, national, and global environments and/or communities through an exploration of their attributes, artifacts, and interactions. Students will consider the effects of global interconnectedness between Japan, China, India, and the Korean Peninsula in order to understand their mutual impacts on each other's histories and cultures.

CULTURAL NAVIGATION: Students will demonstrate cultural self-awareness, communication skills, and the ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions at Japanese cultural and historical sites as well as with guest speakers, tour guides, and students from Japanese universities. Students will be prepared to apply cultural navigation skills in new contexts, including their future careers.

Ethical Reasoning and Religious Traditions Outcomes:

ETHICAL REASONING: Critically analyze and apply ethical theories to scenarios, while reflecting on personal values and normative concepts.

ANALYTICAL SKILLS: Correctly apply a theoretical framework or method in the analysis of an issue or problem.

Humanities Outcomes:

COMMUNICATION: Communicate effectively with audiences in contextually appropriate ways.

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ANALYTICAL SKILLS: Correctly apply a theoretical framework or method in the analysis of an issue or problem.

Diversity Outcomes:

APPRECIATION OF DIFFERENCE: Analyze diverse cultural elements and how power and privilege influence people's lives.

ANALYTICAL SKILLS: Correctly apply a theoretical framework or method in the analysis of an issue or problem.

List any units or content areas that will be required for all sections of this course.

Units and content areas may vary from year to year, but required units and content areas can include:

- Readings and tours to highlight ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern histories of urban Japan
- Readings and tours to highlight the roles of power, privilege, and difference in the history of urban Japan through an examination of gender, socio-economic differences, and the impact of wars on Japan's urban populace
- Readings and tours that highlight the place of religious institutions in the formation of and daily life in urban Japan
- Tours of museums, sites, and an examination of material culture that allow students to experience what life is/was like in urban Japan
- Exchange opportunities with university students at Osaka Gakuin University
- Opportunities to experience Japanese culture through co- and extra-curriculars such as food making, theater, or baseball games

List any assignments, tests, or other assessments that will be required for all sections of this course.

Assignments may vary from instructor to instructor, and may include quizzes, keeping a daily journal, participation, a photo journal, and a final exam.

List any readings or other materials that will be required for all sections of this course.

Readings may vary from year to year, and can include

Barbara Ambros, Women in Japanese Religions

Kamo no chomei, The Hojoki

Morgan Pitelka, Reading Medieval Ruins

Nam Lin-Hur, Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan

Carol Tsang, War and Faith

Letters of Rennyo

Konjaku Monogatari (Tales of Times Now Past)

Murasaki Shikibu, The Tale of Genji

Timon Screech, Tokyo before Tokyo

Amy Stanley, Stranger in the Shogun's City

Tsukada Takashi and Yagi Shigeru, eds., John Porter and Matthew Mitchell, trans. Early Modern Osaka from the Documents, English edition 史料から読む近世大坂

City, Culture and Society Special Issue: The Urban Social History of Osaka: A Study Focusing on the Lifeworld of the Urban Masses, 3, no. 1 (March 2012).

Gerald Groemer, A year in seventeenth-century Kyoto

Jolyon Thomas, et al., "The Corporate form of Religion in Japan"

Richard Bowring, The religious traditions of Japan, 500-1500

John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, A New History of Shinto

Helen Hardacre, Shinto and the State, 1868-1988

List any course policies that will be required for all sections of this course.

course policies may vary from year to year

All relevant University and Departmental policies apply

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If you would like to specify how requirements for contact hours must be met for all sections of this course, please indicate below. (e.g., if any experiential learning activities will replace seat time)

Contact Hours (activities may vary from year to year, but will not fall below the required 50 hours of required contact time):
These do not include traveling to and from locations. Tours and workshops will be led by HPU faculty and certified guides. These will be supplemented by “debriefings” (included in the “HPU faculty guided” hour counts below).

Class (weekdays, 9am-11pm): 30 hours

Orientation session and walking tour: 3 hours

Practical workshops (ex. food classes, 3 total): 2 hours

Tour of Mozu Kofun Tombs and Sakai City Museum: 2 hours guided by HPU faculty, 1 hours self-guided

Tour of Shitennoji Temple: 1 hour guided, 1 hour self-guided

Day Trip to Nara: estimated 3 hours guided by HPU faculty, 2 hours self-guided

Overnight trip to Mt. Koya: 2 hours guided by HPU faculty

Day Trip to Uji City: estimated 2 hours guided by HPU faculty

Tour of Sumiyoshi Shrine: 1 hour guided by HPU faculty

Day Trip to Kyoto: 2 hours guided by HPU faculty

Osaka City Museum tour: 1.5 hours guided by HPU faculty

Osaka Castle Tour: 1.5 hours guided by HPU faculty

Osaka Museum of Housing and Living tour: 1 hour guided by HPU faculty

Tour of Panasonic Museum: 1 hour guided by HPU faculty

Total: 56 hours

Is there anything else the reviewing parties should know about this new course proposal that hasn't been addressed?

Would like the course to meet Experiential Learning, Diversity, and either Ethical Reasoning and Religious Traditions OR Humanities gen eds

Sample Syllabus

- [Syllabus-Urban-History-and-Religion-in-Japan-maymester.docx](#)

Additional Documents

- [Mitchell-Japan-religion-and-history-proposed-experiential-activities.docx](#)