

Dept. of Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian Languages & Cultures

**East Asian Studies 255W** Sp 2008 W 3:30 – 6:20 RA 201 / S 1:00 – 3:40 PH 116 Prof. Cook

([lewis.cook@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:lewis.cook@qc.cuny.edu)) “**Early Japanese Women Writers and The Tale of Genji**” (3 hrs. 3 credits)

## I. The Course

1. Required texts: (1) **The Tale of Genji** by Murasaki Shikibu (Royall Tyler, translator; Vintage, unabridged paperback edition in one volume). Copies are in the campus bookstore. Do not order the book on-line unless you are prepared to pay for expedited shipping. Students who wish to take the course are required to have the book in time to do the first assigned readings and prepare for a quiz and in-class writing work in the second class meeting. (2) **Supplements**: A few supplementary readings will be posted on the E-Reserve course webpage. These are also **required texts**. Print them out, read them, and bring them to class throughout the semester. (3) **Vocabulary**: You are responsible for all of the vocabulary used in the translation and readings. Refer to a dictionary if necessary.

2. Course requirements: Two short (900 to 1200 word) papers, frequent in-class writing assignments, and one final paper (1200 to 1500 words). Paper topics will be assigned in advance. The first short paper must be submitted in duplicate for peer-review work. You may be asked to rewrite either or both of the short papers. **Quizzes** on the assigned readings will be given each week, as a rule. Quizzes will not be returned unless there is reason to do so. Each student will give a brief (15 minute) **presentation** on one of their papers or on about ten pages of the text, as time allows. Prepare to spend **8 to 10 hours per week** on readings and preparation for class, with additional time for writing. Grades will be based on attendance and class participation (20%); a final exam and quizzes (30%); papers and in-class writing (50%).

3. Description: Much of the outstanding prose of early Japanese literature (8th to 12th centuries) was written by women of the Heian court. The most accomplished and influential narrative fiction of this age, Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*, is often considered to be the world's earliest 'psychological' novel. It is a largely realistic, though fictional, account of the lives of members of the nobility and aristocracy of the Heian court, with a focus on motifs of eros and worldly power vs. renunciation and the pursuit of salvation. Written for a small circle of female readers who were members of the Heian court elite, the story assumes a first-hand knowledge of contemporary culture and politics. Some of this knowledge is available from context; some is summarized in the “Introduction” to Tyler’s translation and its footnotes. Lectures will provide additional context as necessary.

## II. The Rules

1. Bring the book to **each** class beginning the second class meeting. If you use the two-volume hard-cover edition, you must bring both volumes. Photocopied editions of the book are unacceptable.

2. The first short paper **must** be submitted on the due date because it will be used for in-class peer review work. If you don’t have the paper you will be marked absent. All **late papers** will be marked down one full letter grade for each day of class they are late.

3. **Attendance** is required. More than one unexcused absence or frequent tardiness will seriously affect the final grade. Three absences will result in a grade of “incomplete” or WU as the case requires.

4. **Plagiarism** in work for this course, including citation without attribution of any writing that is not original, will result in an **automatic failing grade for the course**. **No exceptions** will be made. Students are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is, why it is unacceptable, and how to avoid committing it.

5. Course announcements and supplementary readings will be posted on the course webpage at the E-Reserve library site. Students are responsible for signing up for e-mail alerts to keep in touch.