

Inspiration from the Japan Studies Institute, June 2014

Susan M. Wadsworth MFA, MA, Professor

Fitchburg State University, Massachusetts

I have found my two weeks at the Japan Studies Institute to be most inspiring for several of my classes: Commonwealth of Asian Art, Asian Art and History of Architecture. In addition, being able to participate in so many activities brought a new dimension to my learning about Japan, and the participation, support and wonderful comradery of my colleagues made this a first rate experience all around.

Commonwealth of Asian Art is a class that I developed for Fitchburg State with the help of my colleagues in philosophy and music. It follows several other interdisciplinary courses focusing on Western art and music. It was co-taught by three faculty in 2012: a musician, a philosopher and myself, the art historian. Now, however, there is even more I could add to the course: the modern philosophy of Nishida Kitaro and Hiratsuka Raicho, poetry, a short story, the process of meditation, and perhaps demonstrations (if possible) such as we have had with brushwork, drumming, tea ceremony, etc. (If I cannot add a professional demonstration, I can at least share some of my enthusiasm for this experience.) I have already ordered books on the philosophers and a book of short stories *The Showa Anthology* to enrich my knowledge still further. Perhaps after co-teaching with my colleagues for one more semester, I could teach this course by myself, thanks to the knowledge gained from this Japan Studies Institute. The books, extensive readings in our white notebook, and references made within the senseis' power points will be most useful as references to fill out my knowledge even more.

For both Asian Art and the History of Architecture, my knowledge of certain monuments and temples has increased greatly. Much of the new information is already on the slides submitted as a final project with the same title as above. I can easily now add these slides to the extensive power points already made for class.

I am also most inspired to lead a student trip abroad to visit many of the temples, shrines, palaces and other sites of interest. Learning about the focus and support offered by these various agencies will be most helpful. The Japan Foundation offers multiple programs and grants. Japan Studies and Intellectual Exchange may be one of their most apt programs for study abroad funding. The International Project Support is funding for scholars, including faculty going abroad, with up to \$150,000 available. The Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO) is also good, and JNTO is a source for great up-to-date information on where to go, problems one might encounter, etc....tourist kinds of questions included. I am also hoping to work with my Westfield State colleagues, Brian Chen and Liem Nguyen to share Japanese language classes technologically across our campuses and perhaps for a mutual study abroad plan.

All in all, this was a most fabulous experience and one that I would highly recommend to all. I wish to thank all the supporting institutions and sponsors as well as the incomparable director Yoshiko Higurashi and all my wonderful colleagues for an unforgettable experience.