

Winter Quarter 2023

JAPANESE STUDIES ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES

Friday, March 3, 2023

3:00-4:00pm PST

Zoom (TBA)

RSVP before March 1, 2023

<https://forms.gle/pQe9N2EZzpopUZ6d7>

Alumni Speakers

Keikilani Cabus (B.A. in Japanese Studies, 2017)

Megan Murata (B.A. in Japanese Studies, 2019)

Jack Stovold (B.A. in Japanese Studies, 2007)

UC San Diego

INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Japanese Studies



Keikilani Ezra Cabus
B.A. Japanese Studies 2017

Before university, I attended a small community college which piqued my interest in Japanese studies through baseball. On the team, a few Japanese international students played with us and talked about baseball in Japan. As a result, I had some awareness of players from Japan like Ichiro and Hideo Nomo. Transferring to UCSD was easy after comparing it to other programs. Many school evaluations indicated that UCSD was speaking-focused, while UCLA and others were writing and art-focused.

I sincerely enjoyed the Japanese studies program. Professors and advisors were highly attentive and hospitable to majors and minors in the program. The sense of community in the program was close-knit yet open and friendly to all. I completed language courses with Professor Mochizuki in 20, Professor Sato in 130, and Professor Takeda in 135. I would often take Professor Matsumura's intensive courses on modern Japanese history and visit her office to discuss classes, research interests, and life. Some definite courses that I would recommend would be JAPN 190. The research topics were all-encompassing. All the literature required was always fascinating.

After graduation, I joined the JET program and became an ALT in Fukushima. I taught for five years at 20 different elementary and junior high schools in Fukushima City. During my contract, I volunteered with Minami Souma Volunteer Center and Playground of Hope in Tohoku. I also became the Tohoku API leader and Fukushima Kenpoku area support leader. In addition, I was a member of a lowrider car club in Fukushima despite driving 'kyusha.' Also, I played amateur baseball with some local teams and coached all my junior high schools. Currently, I own a small business shipping vintage Japanese cars and parts while waiting for application results for graduate school at UCSD. Hopefully, I can soon reunite with this esteemed program and faculty again.

My name is **Megan Murata** and I graduated UCSD as an undergrad at the end of Winter Quarter in 2019 with a major in Japanese Studies.

My interest in Japanese stems from my father. He's Japanese and growing up I thought it was so cool that he could translate manga on the fly and I wanted to be able to do that. Unfortunately, he was really busy when I was growing up, so I didn't learn the language from him. In college, I knew I wanted to pursue Japanese language study, and with UCSD's 5th year Japanese classes along with the business Japanese series, in addition to falling in love with the campus, I knew I wanted to spend my college career at UCSD.

Overall, I really enjoyed the professors and the flexibility of the Japanese Studies course – there are a number of really cool classes, of which my favourites were definitely JAPN190 with Professor Turner and the Japanese Politics course. I learned a whole lot in both and I felt both were very well taught. The language skills as well as cultural awareness I gained from the program has really ensured that I've thrived in my post-college positions and have gotten me significantly closer to that ever-elusive personal goal of native-level Japanese fluency.

Currently, I'm a Japanese Language Program Coordinator at the JFLA. I had previously spent 3 years on the JET Programme down in Yamaguchi Prefecture and the job listing came up on the Southern California JET Alumni Association email. I wanted to find a position that allowed me to utilise and continue to improve my Japanese skills and network, so I applied and was hired back in early December!

As for a message to current students, I was lucky enough last year to be invited to speak at this event and my previous message was along the lines of effective communication to manage expectations. I stand by that message (and I don't just mean managing your own expectations, nor is this meant in a bad way! Sometimes I've managed my expectations by trying not to get myself stuck in how something is going to go poorly or wrong or what have you), but would like to add the very cliché: sometimes, you just gotta go for it.

The worst (most of the time) that can happen is someone/company says, "No.". Then you pick yourself up, review what you've learned, alter your course a bit, and continue.

Hello! My name is **Jack Stovold**, and I earned a bachelor's degree in Japanese studies, my major, from UCSD in Spring quarter 2007.

As a kid, I had long been interested in Japan, its culture and the language, but I didn't have a lot of opportunities to study or speak it, aside from a few courses here and there, and all of my home study books. That all changed when I got into UCSD and was able to fully engross myself in my studies. I was immediately excited by all the new resources and opportunities available to me! So many classes to take, and so many people to talk to.

One of the great things about the UCSD Japanese studies program, is that it's not just the language. You will encounter a whole range of different avenues for study. You'll learn a little, no actually a lot, about a variety of fields, be it politics, culture, history, literature, cinema, pop culture, or any number of others. Some of my favorite classes were the ones where I learned about topics I never imagined I would study, sometimes things I had never even heard of. And while the language classes were my favorites, the knowledge I built in my other courses enhanced my language studies and gave me more context with which to appreciate them, as well as the reverse being true.

The program also gave me the opportunity of a lifetime, when, through UCSD, I was able to study abroad in Japan for six months, something I likely never could have done otherwise. To this day, those are some of my most cherished memories and I'm still thankful for the opportunity and for what it meant for my future.

Not long after graduating, armed with the skills and knowledge I obtained at UCSD, I moved to Japan, and have been living there ever since, for over fifteen years now. After many rewarding experiences teaching English to Japanese students in all walks of life, I was able to pass the highest level (N1) of the JLPT, Japan's most widely recognized international test of Japanese Proficiency. This enabled me to be employed in my current position as an Associate Liaison Specialist for the International Affairs Section at the Fukuoka Institute of Technology (FIT), in Fukuoka, a lovely city in southwestern Japan. In addition to helping both Japanese and foreign students in their studies, the position also requires some translation, presentations, and other skills requiring competence in Japanese, which I am still happy to be able to use every day. All of this is thanks to that journey I began not too long in the Japanese Studies Department at UCSD.

To the students today, I say go for it, and really put your heart into it! The more you learn, the more you'll want to learn, and take as many opportunities as come your way to use your newfound skills in real life and build relationships. Talk to people. Language, is after all, at its heart, all about people.