



Course description & other information **EARLY DRAFT**

**Japan 159 Contemporary Japanese Literature: Oe Kenzaburo
Spring 2008**

**Instructor: John R. Wallace / Meets: T&Th 2–3:30PM, Dwinelle 223
web site: [bSpace](#)**

Course content

This class provides an opportunity to read and discuss some of the central ideas that Ôe Kenzaburô 大江健三郎 (1935–) has developed over his writing career. We will be read primarily fiction written from the early days of his writing in 1957 through the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994. We will focus on his attitude towards family and the disadvantaged and, through these themes, consider his ideas about marginalized individuals and social classes. We will pay close attention to how his concepts have developed or otherwise changed over time. We read both in English translation and his original modern Japanese.

Language requirements

Approximately 50% of class time reading is devoted to reading in the original Japanese. The student should be enrolled in J100B (the second semester of 4th-year modern Japanese) or have an equivalent training to that level. Even so, the materials will be difficult and the student should be aware of this ahead of time and plan accordingly.

Texts that need to be acquired

There are four English translations that we read in their entirety. These have been preordered and are at Analog Books. *An Echo of Heaven* will be available later. Analog Books is at 1816 Euclid Ave (about one block walking out from North Gate), tel. 843-1816. Other materials will be distributed digitally. The four books are:

- ◆ *Nip the Buds, Shoot the Kids* (Grove/Atlantic 1996) / 芽むしり仔撃ち、めむしりこうち 1958
- ◆ *A Personal Matter* (Grove/Atlantic 1994) / 個人的な体験、こじんてきなたいけん 1964
- ◆ *The Silent Cry* (Kodansha 1997) / 万延元年のフットボール、まんえんがんねんのふっとぼーる 1967
- ◆ *An Echo of Heaven* (Kodansha 2000) / 人生の親戚、じんせいのしんせき 1989

Evaluated exercises

This course places heavy emphasis on developing critical understanding of Ôe's ideas through careful reading at home and active discussion in class. There are **two exams**: a take home essay at mid-term and an in-class essay during finals week. **Class participation** is very important and measured in a variety of ways including attendance, the leading of class discussion at least once during the term, consistent participation in class discussion, and the submission of class notes summarizing discussions at least once during the term with a second assignment as a supporting note-taker. **Class preparation** is important as well and measured in a variety of ways including the possibility of pop quizzes and evidence of having read *and thought over* the material ahead of class. Each student is also expected to submit one thorough **vocabulary gloss** at a predetermined time during the semester. Details of grading are provided on a separate document available on bSpace titled "J159 Grading Details". An excel sheet titled "Estimate Your Final Grade" is also there.

How the categories of evaluated exercises are weighted for the final course grade

Class preparation	25%
Class participation	45%
• lead discussion, 6% • join class discussion 10% • primary recorder 10% • secondary recorder 6% • vocabulary gloss 13%	
Tests (mid-term, final)	30%

How to reach me

Office hours are Wednesdays and Fridays 12:15–1:30PM and by appt. Monday and Wednesday afternoons. My office is Dwinelle 5106. My email is jwallace@berkeley.edu.