

### Rationale

Western countries that were predominantly Christian have recently changed into multireligious societies. Along with Islam, Asian religions such as Buddhism (Zen, etc.) and Asian religious practices (Yoga, Reiki, Fen hsui, etc.) are exerting considerable influence. Multireligious societies must learn to understand and accept people of different religions. There is the urgent need for interreligious communication and understanding. The example of Asian churches, which have been in a religiously plural world for a long time, can help to better respond to this challenge. They can offer experience and wisdom through study centers which are dedicated to research on Asian religions and interreligious dialogue. One of these institutes, the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, an institute of the National Christian Council of Japan (NCCJ), has established the “Interreligious Studies in Japan Program” (ISJP) in order to assist church and theology to be better prepared for meeting the new challenges.

### Purpose

The ISJP offers the following learning opportunities:

1. Convey a solid basic knowledge of religions in Japan
2. Experience of religions in Japan
3. Interreligious dialogue (encounter with religions in Japan)
4. Introduction to Japanese culture and spirituality
5. Exposure to the situation of churches in a religiously plural environment and introduction to problems of enculturation
6. Introduction to Theology in dialogue

### Target Group

Students of theology (all denominations); students of education who intend to become school teachers in

religion; graduate and postgraduate students of theology, education, Japanese studies and religious studies. — Students are expected to be open to new learning experiences in a foreign culture (cross-cultural communication). Solid knowledge of English is required for the classes.

### Curriculum

The ISJP offers the following courses:

1. Introduction to Shinto and Folk Religion
2. Introduction to Japanese Buddhism (history, teaching, and practice of the different schools)
3. Introduction to Japanese New Religions
4. Introduction to Japanese Christianity
5. Introduction to theology in dialogue
6. Introduction to basic Japanese language

The courses are held over the period of one semester

### Exposure Program

- Fieldtrips to Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, headquarters of new religions, and Christian churches.
- Dialogue meetings with representatives of other religions.
- Special lectures by scholars on selected themes.
- One week fieldtrip to Tokyo

### Libraries

In addition to the NCC Study Center’s library, the following institutions offer their libraries to the participants of this Program:

The Italian School of East Asian Studies (Kyoto)  
The Japan Foundation (Kyoto)  
L’Ecole Francaise d’Extreme-Orient (Kyoto)

### Board

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\* Members of the Executive Board

*The NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions* is an ecumenical research institute of the National Christian Council of Japan. Since its foundation in 1958, it is pursuing studies of religions in Japan, research in enculturation of Christianity, and interreligious dialogue. It is located in central Kyoto next to the Imperial Palace Park and houses a library (in English and Japanese) on religions in Japan, as well as on history, culture, etc. The Center also publishes the journals *Japanese Religions* and *Deai* (Encounter). It cooperates with similar research centers in the Ecumenical Group for the Study of Interreligious Dialogue (EGSID) and with research institutes of various religious groups and universities in Japan.

More than 100 years ago, the British poet Kipling wrote a verse which would subsequently enter the English language almost as a cliché : 'Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.' Much has changed since then. East meets West and vice versa. The phenomenon known as globalization, driven in large part by recent technological progress, has led to an exposure of the West in the East and the East in the West. To avoid the superficial trappings of this exposure, a move towards a real encounter, where the challenges facing both East and West are taken seriously, an intentional study of the significance of culture and religion, community and society in both East and West is needed. It seems to me that the project of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto is an important step in this direction. Through this project, I hope, there will be opportunities to learn about how best to live in a world of globalization, appreciating differences and finding new ways of together addressing challenges to our interdependent world.

Prof. Dr. Konrad Raiser  
Former General Secretary  
World Council of Churches

I am happy to learn of this new ecumenical initiative you are undertaking in order to answer the need of good and sound interreligious dialogue which we Christians must continue to promote. There is certainly need for a solid theological foundation for dialogue with people of other religions and their religious traditions. Please accept my congratulations for these efforts towards training Christian leaders in interreligious dialogue.

Msgr. Michael Fitzgerald  
President  
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Cooperation with the  
Kyoto Graduate Union of Religious Studies  
This network of Buddhist and Christian universities (<http://www.kgurs.jp>) enables students to take courses in other universities than they are enrolled in. ISJP students with sufficient knowledge of Japanese may attend classes of their choice additionally to those of ISJP.

Requirements for Application  
Application form (to be filled out in English); CV (including university studies, hobbies and volunteer activities); a letter of recommendation by a professor, photocopy of passport (validity minimum one year, for visa application); two passport pictures; letter of guarantee for sufficient financial support (e.g. scholarship).  
Application deadline:  
March 31. 2013 for the fall semester of 2013 (in certain cases exceptions acceptable).  
Application is to be sent to the ISJP Coordinator.

Living Costs and Tuition  
Living costs and accommodation:  
minimum ¥ 100.000 per month (estimate)  
Tuition: ¥ 100.000 per semester

Inquiries and application

**NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions**  
Interreligious Studies in Japan Program (ISJP)  
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## INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES IN JAPAN PROGRAM

宗教  
研修

Brushstroke Choko Okada

**NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions**  
Kyoto, Japan

In cooperation with the  
**Kyoto Graduate Union of Religious studies**