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Like many of my peers, I have always been fascinated by Japanese popular culture. I started learning Japanese simply because I wanted to understand what they were saying without relying on subtitles. After four years of studying Japanese in high school, my passion for wanting to learn more about Japan's culture and language has motivated me to pursue a major in Japanese Studies.

The Japanese Studies Program at UCSD offers a wide range of classes, from first to fifth-year Japanese, along with various non-language electives. I loved how we got to explore many different aspects of Japan in the upper-division language classes. These classes are incredibly flexible, covering everything from current events and popular culture to environmental issues, including SDGs. Learning about SDGs in my Japanese classes was eye-opening. I encounter discussions and initiatives related to them frequently in my job and have translated documents related to the topic. I am also grateful for our program for including the fifth-year Japanese class, which allowed us to further refine our language skills for practical use.

Moreover, in Japanese for Professional Purposes (JAPN 135), we had the chance to create our own projects, plan activities, and collaborate in groups. These in-class projects have been invaluable in my job, where I organize events and presentations to promote international exchange. The mandatory writing course, Contemporary Issues in Japanese Studies (JAPN 190), was also enjoyable. The course offers deeper discussions on various topics in Japan, and I got to research more about my interest in Japan's soft power influences. I further expanded my knowledge about soft power from non-language elective courses such as Japanese Films (LTEA 138) and Japanophone Speculative Fiction (LTEA 132).

Overall, my experience with Japanese Studies at UCSD has been incredibly fulfilling. I really enjoyed meeting peers who share the same interests as me and having wonderful professors who are supportive both inside and outside of class. The knowledge I gained and the connections I made through Japanese Studies have been indispensable in my work and daily life in Japan.

To current Japanese Studies students, I encourage you to enjoy the journey of learning Japanese and let your interest guide you. Try to make full use of the great resources available, get to know our amazing professors, and, if the opportunity arises, consider studying abroad. Have fun and make friends in your Japanese class because these peers might very well become your travel companions in Japan.

I hope your time with Japanese Studies at UCSD will be a rewarding and unforgettable experience.