

Megan Murata

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Municipal JET, employed by the Hofu City Board of Education

For college, I knew I wanted to study Japanese — I wasn't sure what else I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to focus on Japanese at least as a part of my college career. UCSD happens to be one of the few schools that offers 5th year Japanese, and that was my goal: to get good enough that I could take 5th year Japanese. Additionally, when I came to visit the campus, I absolutely fell in love with it. I'm pretty sure I stepped out of the car and went, "Yes. Here. This is where I want to be."

I really liked the flexibility of the courses and how I had the time and ability to learn and enjoy courses that were both relevant to my major and those of personal interest (helped by the fact that I was part of ERC and also really like ancient history). I really appreciated this flexibility when I spent a summer and year abroad at ICU in my junior year.

JAPN 190 under Professor Turner, hands down, was my favorite class, followed closely by the Japanese Politics class I took (unfortunately, I don't remember the Professor's name at the moment). I really enjoyed JAPN 190 because it was a fantastic blend of contemporary pop culture, history, sociology, and our own personal interests...so basically I got to really enjoy myself and indulge writing about my various interests. I also really appreciated that Professor Turner enjoyed my occasionally really off the wall one page responses to our assigned readings!

I also really liked Japanese Politics, because as much as I don't personally enjoy modern history (which is not to say I don't think it's important— it absolutely is!), I'd never had the chance to learn all that much about modern Japanese politics. And holy cow did I learn. The class was very well taught, and probably the only reason I did so well taking a similar class while studying abroad (I thought it would be cool to take the same class in Japan and compare the perspectives shown).

For my personal goals, it's helped me communicate significantly better with my paternal grandparents and my extended family that lives in Japan. I'm also now able to read manga in Japanese, which is something I've been looking forward to being able to do since I was five. Professionally, it's definitely helped me on the JET program, and has made communication with my teachers and students easier. I also feel like my readings for classes and experiences abroad also helped prepare me for the work environment, so the culture shock was significantly less than it could have been.