

Hello there! My name is Shivang Sharma and I graduated from UC San Diego in Winter 2023 with a Bachelor's of Science in Marine Biology and a minor in Japanese Studies. After graduating, I worked as a Lab Assistant for the Gerwick Lab of Scripps Institution of Oceanography where I was responsible for genome assembly and the bio-informatics of the lab's cyanobacterial database. I worked for a year before I switched positions to the Salk Institute for Biological Studies where I worked as a Greenhouse Lab Technician responsible for the environmental and mechanical maintenance of genetically modified crops in Encinitas. I worked for another year before leaving San Diego to pursue graduate studies. I am currently working/studying as a Masters of Marine Science student at Hawaii Pacific University, Oahu, Hawaii. My current goals are to undertake research in vertebrate behavioral ecology and expand my work into a PhD that I would like to pursue in Japan, hopefully in research institutes in either Tohoku, Okinawa, etc.

My reason to take Japanese Studies as a minor started when I took an interest in anime when I was in high school. I consumed an ungodly amount of anime and Japanese-related media in a very short span of time and as a result, I picked some of the basic phrases of "hello", "thank you", "where is the toilet?". When I moved to San Diego for college, I wanted to expand my horizons beyond my studies and thought it would be pretty cool to learn Japanese since I had a very rudimentary understanding. This prompted me to take JAPN 10A in my first quarter. It was in this class that I was approached by the student organization JSA (Japanese Student Association- y'all should check them out) to practice my Japanese at their language tables. From that point forward, I learned so much about the culture, history, more language, music, and food from JSA, that I wanted to learn even more by taking as many classes as I could. And before I knew it, I satisfied the minor requirements.

Some of my favorite classes were HIEA 112-114 which explored Japan's history up until the Meiji restoration. I like to think I am a wannabe history buff as I am a huge fan of Japan's history as a feudal state. That being said, my #1 favorite class was a portrayal of a different kind of history- films. LTEA 138 was hands down my favorite class at UCSD, as it gave me opportunities to watch Japanese films of various time periods and construct analyses on film-making as well as the mindset of society back in those periods. My final project was based on the anime movie "Summer Wars" (totally recommend). Also, I am extremely grateful to have had Kamioka Sensei as my professor. She was my professor for the majority of my language classes and oversaw my growth as an individual and I am very grateful for her presence in my life. My experiences through the Japanese minor expanded my understanding of language, as well as a peek into another culture other than my own, broadening my perspective and empathy towards people. It also allowed me to communicate and meet some of my closest friends and make some of my best memories. I plan to use all that I learned to explore Japan for its culture and to meet new people.

Advice from me: Don't stop believing. There will probably be a thousand moments where you feel like you have to settle for a reality that's far from your dreams. However, as long as you persevere and push forward against any and all odds, there will come a moment where you can finally choose your aspirations. As someone coming from a similar situation, I can tell you that the probability that you find such an opportunity is and will never be zero (statistically impossible). Also for those who are worried about speaking Japanese due to lack of confidence: language is meant to be utilized in many different forms so that as long as you can use it in anything- jokes, memes, actual conversations- you will be much more comfortable in finding the right words and feelings to communicate.