

Interview with Makoto West from the University of South Alabama

Could you give a brief introduction of yourself and your connection to Japan?

I was born and raised in Ichihara, Japan, which is Mobile's sister city.

Could you discuss any activities and resources (related to Japanese culture/language) that are available through the university?

I teach Japanese for the LTL (Lesser Taught Languages) program at USA. There are also a Japanese history and Japanese film classes available.

Are there any outside resources or activities that you would recommend to those interested in learning more about the Japanese language and culture?

We have International Festival in Mobile. It was cancelled last year, but they usually have Japanese performances, including Japanese taiko (drums) and dance. You can also eat Japanese food and meet Japanese people. There are also many resources on YouTube that will teach about Japanese language and culture.

What is your teaching style?

I am currently teaching some classes online, as well as in person. I like to incorporate conversation in the room, as well as providing notes and study material to add to what is available in the textbook.

Have you noticed a pattern/trend as to why your students are interested in Japan or the Japanese language?

Many students seem interested in either travel or studying in Japan, or they want to watch Japanese anime or read manga in Japanese.

Do many of your students express the intent to incorporate their love for Japan into their future careers or daily life?

Yes.

If so, are there any common/similar goals that you've noticed regarding your students' plans?

Some of my students have gone to Japan to teach English, as well as continue their college career there. Others enjoy anime and manga.

How do you stay engaged in Japanese culture from home?

I watch Japanese news programs. I also speak Japanese with my children at home, and we watch anime and Japanese movies together on the weekends.

How do you keep the students in the program interested and engaged in Japan/Japanese culture?

I try to talk about Anime and Japanese culture during the course of teaching my lessons and encourage them to pursue opportunities to travel to Japan.