

Instructor: Anri Yasuda  
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Class meets in MON 251, W. 7:10-10 PM

**Japanese Culture Through Film**  
**(ANTH 3709/ JAPN 3162. Fall 2016)**

**Overview:**

The aim of this class is to study aspects of Japanese culture through 1.) reading and discussing works of scholarship and journalism about Japanese values, beliefs, and customs; 2.) critically viewing cinematic works made in Japan, and 3.) analyzing how these films critique, celebrate, or otherwise depict their cultural contexts. It is important to keep in mind that while films provide us with an unparalleled view into how people think, feel, and act in various environments and circumstances, they are works of art rather than unfiltered records of actual lives. We must therefore be attuned to filmmakers' individual approaches and creative innovations, in addition to the worldviews of the characters they depict in their films. Rather than asking how 'accurately' Japanese culture is depicted in any given film, we should think about why each film depicts the world as it does. Paying attention to these multiple, overlapping perspectives will provide us with a fuller understanding—and a deeper enjoyment—of how films represent Japanese culture.

We should also be aware that there are numerous modes of experiences and identities in different sectors of Japanese society, and we should thus refrain from drawing reductive and essentialist conclusions about 'Japanese-ness' at large. That said, there are certain shared understandings, relational dynamics, and values that pervade Japanese society and define its unique parameters. Reading assignments will help us to grasp and study these concepts. Discussions will help us synthesize and explore our findings. Throughout the course, we will consider the broad question of what 'culture' means, and what we can learn by appreciating cultural differences.

Class will begin with a lecture/discussion and occasionally a quiz, followed by a screening of a film. Attendance is mandatory. Any student who cannot attend class will be expected to view the movie on his/her own time. No prior knowledge of Japanese culture or the Japanese language, or prior exposure to film studies or the study of anthropology, is required.

**Objectives:**

Throughout the semester, participants of this course will be exposed to a wide variety of Japanese films and learn the larger context of Japanese history, religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and ongoing social issues. Through completing the reading assignments and engaging with the weekly lectures/ discussions, students will gain familiarity with Japanese ideas and circumstances, and then analyze these in terms of their cinematic representations. Also, students will develop the comparative perspectives and vocabulary necessary for the critical analysis and constructive discussion of cultural productions in a global context.

**Learning Outcomes:**

On completing this course, students will be able to assess and knowledgeably discuss key issues and themes in Japanese society, including those tied to contemporary events as well as those with deeper roots in Japanese history. Students will have a solid understanding of Japanese cultural discourses, and be able to analyze these in a comparative framework. They will also be able to view and assess films critically.

**Average Amount of Independent Learning Expected per Week:** Approximately 5 hours. In addition to required readings and a writing assignment every week, there will be quizzes and longer papers some weeks. On occasion, you will also be required to watch films and segments of films outside of class.

**Requirements and Grading:**

**Weekly response postings.-----20%** By **5PM on Monday** each week, please post a short critical observation about how the film we saw in the previous class takes into account the aspects of Japanese culture that you read about that week. Think about how the film questions/challenges/reflects/endorses/parodies the Japanese cultural conditions and themes you read about, and write about **any one or two points or details in the film**

that you found interesting, shocking, moving, confusing, etc. (You don't have to discuss every aspect of the film or the readings.)

The responses should be between 4 to 10 sentences long. *This is not meant to be a full, formal essay.* **Take notes during the film screening for character/ place names/ details so that you can write about them accurately, and refer to specific concepts and terms from the readings in your analysis.**

**You must include at least one quote from the readings (with page number) in your response.**

You will be graded on a scale of 0 to 10. Grading comments, when relevant, will be given in annotated form.

A legend for the annotations is as follows:

L: Late. Your posting is late. (-1 to -2, depending on lateness.) Please post by Monday, 5PM. After that, you can post your response up to 8AM on Tuesday after which no submissions will be accepted.

Q: Quote. You did not include a quote from the readings in your response. (-2)

Q/ ER: Quote accuracy. You ascribe the quote to the wrong source, transcribe it inaccurately, or don't list the page number. (-1)

RL: Quote choice. The selection of your quote is not relevant to or appropriate for your argument. (-1 to -3 depending on degree.)

AG: Your main idea/argument is not logical, or sufficiently explained. (-1 to -3, depending on degree.)

AM: Ambiguous Statement. You give an ambiguous statement (s) that needs further development or clarification. (-1 to -2, depending on degree.)

ER: Your response evinces a significant error in terms of the film's plot, or the proper nouns (character and place names, etc) that occur in the film. OR, your response includes an error in terms of key concepts, historical context, etc. (-1 to -3, depending on degree.)

Other comments will be developed and added as needed. Please note that I am not grading for syntax and grammar, but you should edit your work as it will affect the clarity and impact of your ideas.

If you have any questions about the comments, please ask me!

You will get a 0 for each missed posting.

If you miss the 5PM Monday deadline, you can still post up to 12 PM on Tuesday after which no submissions will be accepted. 1 point will be deducted from late submissions.

I will drop the 1 lowest posting grade.

**Participation in discussions.-----15%** Discussions will be initially based on your reading responses, so please look over what you posted on Blackboard before class as I may call on you. I will note each time you contribute *an informed opinion, analysis, or detailed answer* in class.

You will get an A (numerically calculated as a 97%) if you speak in 6 or more classes; an A- (numerically calculated as a 92%) if you speak in 4-5 classes; a B+ (numerically calculated as an 88%) if you speak in 2-3 classes; a B (numerically calculated as a 85%) if you speak in 0-1 classes.

I will input your participation on Blackboard before the next class. (I will aim to post this by the end of the day on Friday.) **You are responsible for checking your participation grade. If I didn't register your participation for a class, you have until the next class to tell me.** Please send me an email or come to office hour and remind me what your comment was in regards to and I will update your record.

**Quizzes-----25%** There will be occasional short quizzes in class. To prepare, please go over key concepts from the readings and salient facts about the films watched since the last quiz.

We will correct the quizzes in class immediately after you complete them. **Please take notes when we go over the answers as they may help you study for the final exam. I will not be returning the quizzes.**

If you miss a quiz, you can make it up before the next class. You can do so during office hours. *Please email me to arrange this.* You cannot make up a quiz after a week, unless you have contacted me in advance regarding your circumstances.

Please come to class on time, especially when we have a quiz! If you come to class after a quiz has started, you will be asked to return after we have finished grading the quizzes, and will be marked late for that class. You will also have to arrange a time to make up the quiz should you choose to do so.

**Two papers (900-1100 words)-----15% each= 30%** Over the course of the semester, you must complete two papers in response to the essay prompts that accompany each film. You can choose which films you want to write about. Each paper is due at the start of the next class.

No late papers will be accepted unless you consult with me at least 2 days before the due date.

Please see the Paper Grading Rubric for a detailed explanation on how papers are evaluated.

Please bring in a hard copy of the paper to class, and send me an email to let me know that you have handed in a paper that week.

**Final Exam----10%** The test will be cumulative.

**Attendance:** Attendance is **mandatory**, except with a verifiable and documented reason—religious holiday, illness with a doctor's note, accident with police report, University athletic event, etc. Please see the University Policies on Attendance as stated by the Office of the Registrar. (<http://registrar.gwu.edu/university-policies#attendance>)

Excused absences: Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. You will be able to make up quizzes and paper submissions. The absence will be excused.

If you need to miss class for an athletic event, scheduled medical procedure, or other foreseeable and legitimate reason, **please let me know by email before you miss the class** to arrange for makeup quizzes and assignment submissions. The absence will be excused.

If you miss class for an unforeseen illness or injury and go to the doctor, **please show me documentation for it before the next class for it to count as an excused absence.** If you show me documentation, you will be able to make up quizzes and paper submissions. The absence will be excused.

Unexcused absences: You are allowed **TWO** unexcused absences for the semester. This should cover all personal reasons and illnesses for which you do not seek medical treatment.

I will either take roll or pass around an attendance sheet in class. **You are allowed TWO absences for the semester, after which you will be deducted a letter grade (e.g., A to A-, B+ to B, etc.) from your total final grade for each additional absence.**

Please come to class on time!! If you are late by more than 10 minutes, it will count as half of an absence. (2 tardies= 1 absence.)

If you arrive late to a quiz, you cannot get extra time to finish it. If you arrive after 7:20 PM, we will likely already be grading the quiz in class so please do not come in. Please come back to class after 7:30 PM when we are done. You will be marked late for that class.

**Grade Scale:**

Numbers	Letters
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
<60	F

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** University policies concerning academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced, and students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with these regulations. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>)

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** To request disability accommodations, students should contact the Office of Disability Support Services ( <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss> ), (202)-994-8250 (TDD/voice).

**Office Hours:** M 3-4, W 3-4, or by appointment. My office is in Rome 456.

My email address is [ayasuda@gwu.edu](mailto:ayasuda@gwu.edu) . When you write me, please address me as “Professor Yasuda” or “Yasuda Sensei” (安田先生).

**Required Texts:**

Hendry, Joy. *Understanding Japanese Society*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Routledge, 2012.

Articles in pdf form, posted on Blackboard under “Readings”.

**Most films watched in class are available at Gelman Library.** If a DVD is listed as being in the Global Resources Center, please go to Room #708 in Gelman to access it. Otherwise, please go to the Circulation Desk.

**SCHEDULE <subject to change> :**

**Week 1. 8/31. Introductions.**

Discuss how films 'represent' or 'document' cultures: do films provide a more 'real' account of the way people live than other artistic media? How do viewers' and filmmakers' frames of reference influence understandings of cinematic works? How do films 'reflect' the societies they are created in? More generally, how are cultural productions from various contexts consumed in an increasingly global cultural marketplace? A brief discussion of the history of film in Japan. Etc.

Watch in class: *Harakiri*, dir. Kobayashi Masaki, 1962.

**Week 2. 9/7. Picturing the Past: *Harakiri*.**

Discuss *Harakiri*.

Topic: Japanese history and cultural memory.

Watch in class: *Tokyo Story*, dir. Ozu Yasujiro, 1953.

**Week 3. 9/14. The Family Unit: *Tokyo Story***

Discuss *Tokyo Story*.

Topic: families in Japan.

Watch in class: *The Ballad of Narayama*, dir. Imamura Shohei, 1983.

**Week 4. 9/21. Local Communities and Social Order: *The Ballad of Narayama*.**

Discuss *The Ballad of Narayama*.

Topic: social order in Japan.

Watch in Class: *Ringu*, dir. Nakata Hideo, 1998.

**Week 5. 9/28. Women at Work, Home, and Beyond: *Ringu*.**

Discuss *Ballad of Narayama*.

Topic: discourse regarding women in Japanese society.

Watch in Class: *Shall We Dance?*, dir. Suo Masayuki, 1996.

**Week 6. 10/5. Men at Work, Home, and Beyond: *Shall We Dance?* .**

Discuss *Shall We Dance?*.

Topic: discourse surrounding men in Japanese society.

Watch in class: *Goddess of Exams*, dir. Iwamoto Hitoshi, Otani Taro, Miyuki Honma. 2006. Ep. 1 & final episode.

**Week 7. 10/12. School and Life: *The Goddess of Exams*.**

Discuss *Goddess of Exams*.

Topic: school and education in Japan.

Watch in class: *Grave of the Fireflies*, dir. Isao Takahata, 1988.

**Week 8. 10/19. War Memories: *Grave of the Fireflies*.**

Discuss *Grave of the Fireflies*.

Topic: pacifism and war memory in Japan.

Watch in class: *My Darling is a Foreigner*, dir. Ue Kazuaki, 2010.

**Week 9. 10/26. Multicultural Japan: *My Darling is a Foreigner*.**

Discuss *My Darling is a Foreigner*.

New topic: Multiculturalism in Japan.

Watch in class: *Tampopo*, dir. Itami Jûzô, 1985.

**Week 11. 11/2. Worldly Appetites: *Tampopo*.**

Discuss *My Darling is a Foreigner*.

Topic: Culinary culture in Japan.

Watch in class: *Departures*, dir. Takita Yôjirô, 2008.

**Week 12. 11/9. Life and Death Rituals: *Departures*.**

Discuss *Departures*.

Topic: religion and spirituality in Japanese life.

Watch in class: *Princess Mononoke*, dir. Miyazaki Hayao, 2001.

**Week 13. 11/16. Humans in Nature: *Princess Mononoke*.**

Discuss *Princess Mononoke*.

Topic: nature and Japanese culture.

Watch in class: *Outrage*, dir. Kitano Takeshi, 2010.

**Week 14. 11/23. Happy Thanksgiving! No class.**

**Week 15. 11/30. Law and Outlaws: *Outrage*.**

Discuss *Outrage*.

Topic: law and crime in Japan.

Watch in Class: *Kamikaze Girls*, dir. Nakashima Tetsuya, 2002.

**Week 16. 12/7. Japanese Youth: *Kamikaze Girls*.**

Discuss *Kamikaze Girls*.

Topic: Japan in transition.

Watch in Class: *Lost in Translation*, dir. Sophia Coppola, 2003. Or TBA.

**Final Exam: Date and Time TBA.**

NOTE: In accordance with university policy, the final exam will be given during the final exam period and not the last week of the semester