

SP.270 Japanese Animation: Still Pictures, Moving Minds

Spring 2002

MW3:30-5pm 24-619

M EVE 7:30-9:30pm 1-390

<http://web.mit.edu/esg-seminars/www/sp.270/>

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The popularity of Japanese animation (anime) is increasing worldwide. This course introduces students to this contemporary form and its associated institutions by considering anime as medium, art, culture, and industry. Both new and experienced students will explore series and topics in depth, studying the anime form and comparing it against other artistic works. The course will examine works by specific directors (Oshii Mamoru, Ishiguro Noboru, Miyazaki Hayao) and studios (Gainax, AIC, Production I.G.), and will include guest speakers from the US and Japan. Enrollment is limited to 20 students - please contact the instructor before the seminar to ensure that space is available. All levels (undergrad, grad, staff/faculty) are welcome. 6 units.

This course is designed to be fun and interactive, while it builds a rigorous understanding of the anime medium through its history, its artists, and its institutions. This subject is relevant to all realms of academic inquiry, and should attract students who share interests in media studies, in communications, in commercial and industrial structures, in art and visual form, in gender treatment, and in Japanese culture, fan culture, and cross-cultural studies.

∞ Enrollment

Enrollment is initially limited to 20 students, but more may be accommodated if students demonstrate a desire to complete all of the requirements. A diverse mix of students and backgrounds is optimal, so your degree of experience will not affect your chances of enrollment.

∞ On Units

Students may take SP.270 for 6 units. Additional units may be arranged for separate projects; the required workload increases proportionately. The limitation on units is intended to reduce the workload for freshmen and traditional seminar-takers. See the section on "Expectations."

At 12 units, all expectations must be met.

At 6 units, the project is not required. Students may choose to complete the series analysis or the final paper. All other expectations must be met.

Currently, the units offered are for general elective credit. We are looking into turning these units into HASS-Elective credit units, which may apply to this term.

Objectives

This course is designed to explore each student's academic interest in anime, guided and structured by the information supplied in lectures and discussions. By the end of the course, students will:

- Have a basic understanding of Japanese language and culture as it relates to anime
- Articulate what anime is, and what the "anime style(s)" is, if it exists
- Define the differences between Japanese and American/European animation
- Recognize unique and borrowed techniques that are used in anime
- Develop or adopt specialized vocabulary for anime analysis
- Appreciate anime as a medium and as a cultural product
- Understand the differences between values in fan and academic arenas
- Keep an journal revealing what they think of anime as they encounter it
- Understand the growth and function of the anime fan culture
- Recognize that anime can be a subculture, a mass culture, and a high culture
- Identify and appreciate the components of an anime production
- Identify texts that are significant to the development and definition of anime
- Determine what makes an anime text "artistic" or "significant"
- Recognize themes and motifs of these significant texts in later works
- Trace styles to specific people and to specific cultural forces

Satisfying some of these objectives may require use of special technologies. All students have access to these technologies through their Athena accounts and free resources at MIT. In addition, some students may wish to use the media creation tools around the Institute. For further information on technology use, consult the *Athena User's Guide* and Academic Computing's New Media Center in 26-139 and 9-250.

Expectations and Grading

Students are expected to participate in discussion (20%), complete weekly assignments (15%), keep an online journal (5%), present a series analysis (10%), complete a significant project (30%), and write a final paper (20%). For students taking less than 6 units, the optional parts of the course will not be considered in the final grade. The details of each component are given below.

∞ In-Class Participation

Students must attend the lectures, discussion groups, and screenings. The instructor may only excuse students in case of a medical or family emergency. Partial time conflicts may be accepted on a case-by-case basis, but are discouraged.

∞ Weekly Assignments

There shall be an assignment every week to keep up on the material. These assignments are meant to encourage discussion and stimulate interest in anime inside and outside the classroom. Assignments will be distributed in class and in the MIT Online Discussion Forums on Wednesdays, and will be due the following Monday. Students are encouraged to comment on, or reply to, the responses of others, and to start a conversation. For shorter assignments, replying to other people's responses will be required.

∞ Online Journal

As a supplement to in-class participation, students shall keep a journal of impressions and analyses of anime works that they have seen. The instructor will check these before class begins as a stimulus for

discussion. Entries may be submitted in the MIT Online Discussion Forums. If a journal entry touches on sensitive or personal issues, students may submit them directly to the instructor. Students are encouraged to interact by replying to other's journal entries. Unlike the weekly assignments, the online journal is freeform and optional; students do not need to post regularly if they do not wish to do so. For information on use of the forums, see "MIT Online Discussion Forums" under "Resources."

∞ Series Analysis Presentation

TV and OVA series are the most common formats for anime. Since we will not be able to show all series, students in groups of one or two shall choose and present an analysis of one anime series that was not thoroughly explored in class. The series shall represent approximately one season (about 26 episodes), or a season plus supporting materials (such as a movie). If a series spans many seasons (such as *Yawara!*), students may either choose a particular season, or a pair of seasons in order to compare and contrast plot and character developments. Students should finish watching the series by March 13th. The due date for the series analysis is March 18th, when we will spend the week presenting analyses.

The presentation will last for fifteen minutes. Up to two minutes may be given to plot summary; at least seven minutes shall be analysis. The remaining time shall be devoted to questions. The purpose of the presentation is to gain practical understanding and experience with the many features of anime studied in class. Grading is on the presentation and any supporting materials that the group brings to class.

Students are encouraged to compare notes and ideas between groups, but the final presentations must be wholly their own. The series analysis is optional for 9-unit participants.

∞ Project

The project integrates what the student is learning about anime into a single, concrete media work. Final projects may be done in groups of two or three. Unlike the written research paper (below), the final project is meant to be a significant work to the anime community as a whole. Since a complete project may be time-consuming, it is acceptable to merge this project with a project for another class, provided that anime is the overarching theme. Each group shall submit a one-page project plan for approval of the instructor by March 6th, to determine the project's feasibility. In this report, students must demonstrate that their final projects can meet prescribed goals in the allotted time provided. Grading will be based on academic relevance to the course, and the criteria set forth in the project plan.

Examples for these final projects include:

- A drama music video integrating *El Hazard* and *Sol Bianca* with written commentary
- An academic website oriented around film comparisons of *Escaflowne: A Girl in Gaea* and *Ah! My Goddess the Movie*
- A computer program that faithfully recreates an environment scene in *Tenchi Muyo!*
- An illustrated, shot-by-shot comparison of a significant character from the series analysis, or
- A screenplay for an original anime with a product pitch to a Japanese anime company.

While students may interact with, and use, elements of fan culture in their final projects, it must be emphasized that the project is an academic work.

The final project is due on April 8th; presentations of projects will commence on this week. Project presentations will last for 15 minutes. Students may continue investing time into their projects after the due date. However, project grading will consider work done through the presentation, with regrades (up

to 2/3 of a letter grade) available for work done afterwards. This early due date is meant to relieve stress from the final weeks of the course, when projects will be due for other classes.

☞ Written Research/Analysis Paper

Each student shall write a paper of five to six pages, analyzing a particular anime that was referenced in class. Valid works must constitute a complete story arc: that is, they must be one or more TV episodes, one season of TV episodes, one film, or one OVA sequence. The story arc chosen must differ from the work chosen as the series analysis, although the paper may build on the ideas explored in the series analyzed. The paper may also compare and contrast multiple anime or anime with other media works; however, in-depth treatment of only one anime is expected. Unlike the series analysis, the paper considers one or two substantial features of anime and defends them in-depth. The paper is due by May 8th, with a topic due on April 17th and a rough draft due on April 26th.

Sample topics to explore include: audience attraction to *Tenchi Muyo!*, the defining features of protagonists in *X TV*, gender justice in the first season of *Ranma ½*, selfish love in *Video Girl Ai*, or the cinematography of loneliness in *Cowboy Bebop: "Sympathy for the Devil."*

Times

The course meets twice per week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5pm. Participation in discussions is required and counted towards the final grade. If students cannot attend because of a legitimate medical illness or excused absence, they may post comments online. *However, online participation is not a substitute for in-class discussions.* Screenings will be held on Monday evenings from 7:30-9:30pm in 1-390. There may be special screenings on Friday evenings at MIT Anime Club showings, but these are not required. Discussion sessions will follow the screenings. If students cannot attend screenings, they may check out films from the MIT Anime Club library with a membership.

A Note to Non-Credit Participants

In keeping with the ideals of an accessible MIT education and the OpenCourseWare initiative, some course materials will be available online for world reading. In addition, the online journals and forums are accessible by application to the instructor. The participant must submit his or her real name, a password, and other identifying information. The students must also agree to the external access, as indicated in the Student Information Policy. Credit will only be awarded for enrolled students of the MIT community, and for students who have cross-registered through another university. Access to the online forums does not enroll individuals for credit, nor does it increase the chances of admission to MIT. Participants outside of MIT may follow the course, but must screen films with their own resources.

Resources

☞ MIT Online Discussion Forums

SP.270 will use the MIT Online Discussion Forums at <http://forums.mit.edu/>. These forums are used for weekly assignments, online journals, and archived class notes.

To login for the first time, go to the entrance page and login with your MIT Web Certificate. After registering, e-mail the instructor with your e-mail address and your name as it appears in the MIT Directory (or using finger user@mit.edu). The instructor will add you to the SP.270 list, and will allow you to post and respond to messages in the SP.270 folder.

You can access the forum by navigating to Academic Conference > Other Programs > SP > SP.270. You can also reach the forum directly at <http://forums.mit.edu/acad?13@@.ee6d739>.

Please familiarize yourself with the forum's usage before posting. Help is available at <http://web.mit.edu/webcrossing/www/acadhelp.html>. Students also have rights enumerated under Student Information Policy <http://web.mit.edu/policies/sip/#7>. By default, only MIT-affiliated course participants have access to the forums. In some circumstances, however, a non-credit participant outside of MIT (see above) may wish to join, and if they join, they will see students' names in the forums. You must consent to your name being revealed in this way. If you do not want non-credit participants using the forum, be sure to notify the instructor.

☞ MIT Anime Club Library

If you need reference anime for your research projects, you may borrow from the MIT Anime Club Library with a Club Membership. Visit any of the showings to register. More information is available at the website <http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/>.

☞ The Writing and Communication Center

Everyone can improve his or her writing. The Writing and Communication Center offers free advice to make your expository writing better. For helpful tips and tactics, visit 14N-317 or <http://web.mit.edu/writing/>.

Required and Recommended Readings

Because anime is a very recent phenomenon, there is little academic material on the subject in English. The following is a compilation of English readings that are instrumental to the study of anime.

☞ Required

Clements, Jonathan and Helen McCarthy. *The Anime Encyclopedia*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.
Napier, Susan. *Anime: From Akira to Princess Mononoke*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Press, 2001.

☞ Recommended and Available at the Coop

Poitras, Gilles. *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese in Japanese Animation?* Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1998.
Poitras, Gilles. *Anime Essentials: Every Thing a Fan Needs to Know*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.

☞ Other Recommended Titles

Allison, Anne. *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 2 Number 1. Anime Expo '93.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 2 Number 2. Anime Expo '94.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 3 Number 1. Anime Expo '95.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 4 Number 1. Anime Expo '97.
Ledoux, Trish. *Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of Animerica, Anime & Manga Monthly (1992-97)*. San Francisco: Viz Communications, 1997.
Ledoux, Trish. *The Complete Anime Guide: Japanese Animation Film Directory & Resource Guide*. Issaquah, Washington: Tiger Mountain Press, 1997.
Schodt, Frederik. *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996.
Schodt, Frederik. *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese comics*. Kodansha International, 1983.

☞ Recommended Websites

Anime-Seiyuu Info Page. <<http://www.fanfic.net/~hideaway/seiyuu.htm>>.
Anime Web Turnpike. <<http://www.anipike.com/>>.
Books on Anime, Manga, and their place in Japanese culture. <<http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/books.html>>.
Hitoshi Doi. <<http://www.tcp.com/doi/>>.
MIT Anime Club. <<http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/>>.
Parent's Guide to Anime, A. <<http://www.abcb.com/parents/>>.