

21G.039 Gender and Japanese Popular Culture

Fall 2015

**Prof. Ian Condry
Global Studies and Languages**

**T / R 1:30-3pm
14N-313**

**Contact:
condry@mit.edu**

**Office hours:
Tuesdays, 3-4pm or by appointment**

Course Description

Examines Japanese popular culture with a focus on gender issues, alongside consideration of sexuality, ethnicity and class. We examine the relationships between identity and participation in Japanese popular culture offer a way of understanding the changing character of media, capitalism, fan communities and culture. Topics include *manga* (comic books), hip-hop and other popular music in Japan, *anime* (Japanese animated films) and feature films, Japanese video games, contemporary literature, and online communication. Emphasis will be on contemporary popular culture and theories of gender, sexuality, race, and the workings of power in global culture industries. Each student will be expected to present analysis of the course materials during in-class discussions and to develop a final project based on a particular aspect of gender and popular culture. Several films will be screened outside of regular class meeting times. No prerequisites. Course taught in English.

Graduate students may take the class with permission of the instructor. Grad students will be expected to do some extra work beyond the undergraduate requirements.

Note on 21F.591 Japanese Popular Culture, the Japanese language option

This course may be taken as 21F.591, which indicates the Japanese language option. This designates the same course, but with additional work required (reading and a short essay) in the Japanese language. Students who wish to minor in Japanese are required to take one course with the Japanese language option. Please meet with me early in the term (i.e., within the first four weeks) if you intend to take the course with the Japanese language option.

Course Requirements and Grading Distribution:

Participation	15 %	Throughout the term
Pecha Kucha (micro presentation, 3 min)	5%	First 4 weeks of term
Response papers	10 %	Every class (mostly)
Essay 1	20%	Due Week 6
Essay 2 (4-5 pages) - literature review	15 %	Due Week 11
Final Presentations	10 %	Once (Weeks 11-13)
Final Paper (8 - 10 pages)	25 %	Due the last day of class

There will be no final exam.

Required Texts:

There are no required texts for this class. **Course materials will be available through Stellar website or online.** Students are welcome to buy copies of books used in class, but this is not required.

Important Note on Attendance and Class Participation:

Your attendance is required at every single class. Except in cases of sickness or unavoidable family emergencies, I expect you in class. If you are going to miss class, I would prefer an email explanation prior to class, but after class is still OK. More than two (2) unexcused absences will result in a reduction by 1/3 (e.g., B to a B-) of your final grade. Additional absences will result in additional reductions. I do not give warnings in the event that you are in danger of such a penalty. Notes from S3 are also accepted, but generally not required. For now, I'm willing to work on an honor system basis.

MICROTHEME response papers (1-page, double-spaced)

Microthemes will be due on most days of class to facilitate discussion. No microthemes *are not* due on days when essays are due. In your comments, please note one key point from the author to be discussed, and respond with a criticism of your own or relate it to some aspect of popular culture that you care about (e.g., as illustration, contrast, or counterexample). These need not be polished, and you are allowed to skip one during the semester without penalty.

Grading of Written Work

Written work will be graded according to three criteria:

- Argument. Is there a coherent thesis? How clearly is the argument stated in the introduction and developed throughout the paper? Do the steps of the argument make sense and lead logically to the conclusion?
- Evidence. How well does the essay use the evidence available from the class materials (readings, lectures, films)? Are there contradictory examples that should be discussed to eliminate doubts?
- Style. How well is the paper written? Has it been carefully proofread? Do the introduction and conclusion accurately reflect the paper's argument? Do transitions work to develop the essay, point by point? Does the paper length match the assignment?

Oral Presentations

Student presentations will take place during the final few weeks of class (10 min. each, depending on number of students). Grading of oral presentations will be determined by following criteria:

- Does the oral discussion demonstrate a facility with the course materials?
- How well organized is the presentation?
- How well does the student communicate his/hers ideas, questions, and insights?

I also advise thinking about (and composing) your final sentence beforehand, so that you have something to finish strong with.

PECHA KUCHA – Introduce yourself and an example of popular culture (3-min.).

“Pecha kucha” is Japanese for (roughly) “chit chat.” It is a presentation style invented by some expats in Japan, involving talking while images are shown. For the first few weeks of class, we will use Pecha Kucha presentations: 10 slides (images, no text), each set to run for 20 seconds each. Please use this to introduce yourself and some aspect of popular culture and/or gender studies that you are interested in.

Writing and Communication Center at MIT

The **WCC at MIT** (Writing and Communication Center) offers *free* one-on-one **professional** advice from communication experts (MIT lecturers who all have advanced degrees and who are all published writers). The WCC works with **undergraduate** and **graduate students** and with **post-docs**. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic, creative, job-related, and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing your presentations & designing slides). **No matter what department or discipline you are in**, we help you think your way more deeply into your topic, help you see new implications in your data, research and ideas. The WCC also helps with all **English as Second Language** issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in Kendall Square (**E39-115**, 55 Hayward Street, around the corner from Rebecca’s Cafe). To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/> .

To access the WCC’s many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/> . The Center’s core hours are Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; evening hours vary by semester—check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours.

Rough week by week schedule

Please use Materials section of Stellar for day-to-day schedule

September 10 (R) Introduction to the Course

Lecture:

- What is “popular” culture, and how might it differ from traditional culture, high culture, and mass culture?
- What are some “gender issues” related to Japanese popular culture?
- Overview of the syllabus

Week 1 Theories of Gender: Social, Cross Cultural and Rhetorical

9/15 (T) Gender: Social Theory / Cross Cultural Perspectives

Pecha Kucha (3 students)

Readings from Jackson (1991) *Women’s Studies: Essential Readings*

Microtheme due

9/17 (R) Guest Lecture: Prof. Ed Schiappa (CMS/W) on sex/gender

Readings: Schiappa, Ed (2008) *Beyond Representational Correctness*, Chapter 1, The Impossible Dream of Representational Correctness. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Also, please do the online assessment at:

<http://www.afifthofnothing.com/gendertest.html>

No microtheme due.

Week 2: Gender & Media Theory + “Rotten Girls” (*fujoshi*) Manga

9/22 (T)

Readings:

Jackson (1991) Gender in Media (Stellar)

Higashimura, Akemi *Princess Jellyfish* (manga) Read Episodes 1-3

Microtheme due

9/23 (W) Watch the film *Kamikaze Girls* (streaming from MIT Film Office)

9/24 (R)

Reading: Princess Jellyfish manga, episodes 4-10.

Microtheme due

Week 3: Popular Culture Studies, Essential Readings (9/29, 10/1)

Reading:

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer

1999 "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *The Cultural Studies Reader, 2nd Ed.* S. During, ed. Pp. 29-41. Routledge.

Benjamin, Walter

1969 "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*. H. Arendt, ed. Pp. 217-251. New York: Schocken Books.

McGray, Douglas

2002 "Japan's Gross National Cool" *Foreign Policy*.

Miller, Laura

2011 "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan." *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*.

Jenkins, Henry

2003 "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture" in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, D. Thorburn and H. Jenkins (eds.), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Stellar)

Negus, Keith

2006 "Rethinking creative production away from the cultural industries." In *Media and Cultural Theory*. J. Curran and D. Morley, eds. Pp. 197-208. New York: Routledge.

Film: *Kamikaze Girls* (2004, Dir. Nakashima), streaming from MIT Film Office

Microthemes due

Week 4: Inequality: Economics and Culture

Reading:

Graeber, David (2001) *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. Melville House (excerpts)

Stiglitz, Joseph (2015) *The Great Divide: Unequal Societies and What We Can Do About Them*. New York: W. W. Norton (excerpts)

Piketty, Thomas (2014) *Capital in the 21st Century* (excerpts)

Microtheme due Tuesday, 10/6 only

October 8 – Special Event in lieu of class

1:30 – 4:30pm the disSOLVE unCONFERENCE: a summit on inequality
at the Solve Pavillion (in lawn next to Stata Center)

Week 5: Writing Workshop

10/13 (Tu) NO CLASS (Monday schedule of classes)

10/15 (Th) **ESSAY 1 DRAFT DUE, bring two (2) copies to class for peer-review**

No microtheme this week

Week 6: Gender, Robots, and Technology

10/20 (T)

ESSAY 1 DUE (final version)

In class, watch “Shanghai Dragon” anime short from Studio 4C.

10/22 (R)

READING:

Robertson, Jennifer (2010) “Gendering Humanoid Robots: Robo-Sexism in Japan” in *Body and Society* 16(2): 1-36

FILM: Ghost in the Shell: Arise (episodes 1-4).

Microtheme due Thursday, 10/22 only.

Week 7: Anime and Anthropology

Reading:

Condry, Ian (2013) *The Soul of Anime* (excerpts)

FILM: *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (Dir. Hosoda)

Microthemes due (T/R)

Week 8: Queer, Trans, and Beyond

11/3 (T) Either class or attend US-Japan Program (Harvard)

Ted Bestor, "Washoku (Japanese food) on the World Stage"
12:30-2pm, Knafel Building, second floor seminar room, Harvard

11/4 (W) Film: *We Are Transgenders* (Dir. Ogawa)

11/5 (R)

READING: McLelland, Mark *Queer Japan* (excerpts)

Week 9 - 10: Performing Gender

READING:

Takeyama, Akiko (forthcoming) *Host Clubs in Japan* (excerpts)

Allison, Anne *Nightwork: Hostess Club in Japan* (excerpts)

Robertson, Jennifer *Takarazuka*

Film, Anime, Manga (for reference): *Dream Girls*, *Ouran Host Club*

ESSAY 2 DUE 11/19 (R) Literature of scholarship related to your final project

Weeks 11-13 Student Presentations

Panel discussion format, 4 students per class

Week 14 Conclusions and Future Questions

Final Essay due on the last day of class, 12/10.

Weeks 1 – 3 – Theories of Gender and Popular Culture

DISCUSSION: What is the attraction of Japanese popular culture? How is it different / the same as popular culture elsewhere? What is, and is not, popular culture?

FILM: 9/14 (Wed.) 7:15pm Room to be announced (check Stellar calendar)

Summer Wars (2009, Dir. Mamoru Hosoda)

READINGS (Available on Stellar under Materials; see Stellar Calendar for dates)

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer

1999 "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *The Cultural Studies Reader, 2nd Ed.* S. During, ed. Pp. 29-41. Routledge.

Benkler, Yochai

2006 "Introduction: A Moment of Opportunity and Challenge." Chapter 1 in *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, pp. 1-34. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Benjamin, Walter

1969 "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*. H. Arendt, ed. Pp. 217-251. New York: Schocken Books.

Christakis, Nicholas A., and James H. Fowler

2009 *Connected : the surprising power of our social networks and how they shape our lives*. New York: Little, Brown and Co./Hachette Book Group.

Jenkins, Henry

2003 "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture" in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, D. Thorburn and H. Jenkins (eds.), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Stellar)

Lamarre, Thomas

2006 "Otaku Movement." In *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present*, Yoda, T., and Harootunian, H. (eds.), pp. 358-394. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Negus, Keith

2006 "Rethinking creative production away from the cultural industries." In *Media and Cultural Theory*. J. Curran and D. Morley, eds. Pp. 197-208. New York: Routledge.

Murakami, Takashi

2000 "Superflat Manifesto." In *Superflat*. Tokyo, Japan: MADRA Publishing.

FILM: *Otaku no Video* (1991, Dir. Mori) – clips to be shown in class

DISCUSSION questions to consider:

Where do these authors locate the power of popular culture (either explicitly or implicitly)? How do they conceptualize the roles of technology, artists, fans, businesses?

What analytical differences when we compare thinking of art in terms of "aura" (Benjamin) and in terms of "movement" (Lamarre)? What do we look for as evidence? How does it alter the meaning of popular culture?

Week 4-6 International Japanese Pop Culture: Characters and Networks

Oct. 18 (Tues) SPECIAL EVENT (instead of class on 10/18)

PANEL DISCUSSION: Miku, Virtual Idol: Character, Platform, Crowd
10/18 Tuesday, 3:00 – 5:00 pm, Room to be announced (reception after)

Hiroyuki Itoh, president of Crypton Future Entertainment
Ryotaro Mihara, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

WRITING: ESSAY 1 (5-pages, double-spaced)

DUE Oct. 13 (Thursday) in class

TOPIC: What makes something popular? Using at least two examples of popular culture encountered in this course, discuss this question in relation to the readings, theories, discussions we have had so far. Your microthemes can be revised and rewritten for this paper.

READING:

McGray, Douglas

2002 "Japan's Gross National Cool" *Foreign Policy*.

Miller, Laura

2011 "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan." *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*.

Kelts, Roland

2006 *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Invaded the US* (selections)

Napier, Susan

2007 *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West* (Chapters 6-7).

Marc Steinberg "Anytime, Anywhere: Tetsuwan Atomu Stickers and the Emergence of Character Merchandizing," *Theory, Culture & Society* Mar/May 2009 26: 113-138 (Stellar)

Otsuka, Eiji (2008) "Disarming Atom: Tezuka Osamu's Manga at War and Peace" in *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*, pp.111-126."

Matsui, Takeshi

2009 Gatekeeping Foreign Cultural Products: The Diffusion of Japanese Comics (Manga) in the US, 1980-2006. Working paper at Princeton University.

Mori, Yoshitaka

2006 Subcultural unconscious in Japan: The war and Japanese contemporary artists. In *Popular Culture and Globalisation*. M. Allen and R. Sakamoto, eds. Pp. 174-191. London: Routledge.

Week 7-10: Fans & Cultural Studies: Television, Manga, Internet and Beyond

READING:

Lukacs, Gabriella

2010 *Scripted Affects, Branded Selves: Television, Subjectivity, and Capitalism in 1990s Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. (TEXT)

Azuma, Hiroki

2009 *Otaku : Japan's database animals*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (TEXT)

Ito, Mizuko readings on fans and/or cell phones (TBD)

McLelland, Mark

2000 "No Climax, No Point, No Meaning? Japanese Women's Boy-Love Sites on the Internet." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 274-291.

Mizuki, Shigeru

"TV-kun" (manga short story)

Tsuge, Yoshiharu

"Screwceremony" (or Screw-style) *geki-ga manga*

SPECIAL EVENT: Visit to the Museum of Fine Arts

11/8 (Tu) NO class – instead please visit Japan section of MFA and come prepared to discuss on 11/10.

SPECIAL EVENT: CMS / Cool Japan colloquium:**11/16 (Wed) 5:30pm**

Mizuko Ito (UC Irvine), moderated by IC

“Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World”

Weeks 10-14: Questions of Value, Identity and Media Culture**READING:**

Lunning, Frenchy

2010 *Fanthropologies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

(Text)

Wezorek, Joe

2009 Japanese Dominance of the Video-Game Industry and the Future of Interactive Media. *In The Japanification of Children's Popular Culture:*

From Godzilla to Miyazaki. M.i. West, ed. Pp. 85-105. Lanham, MD:

Scarecrow Press. (Stellar)

Hosokawa, Shuhei

2002 Blacking Japanese: experiencing otherness from afar. *In Popular Music Studies*. D. Hesmondhalgh and K. Negus, eds. Pp. 223-237. New York: Oxford University Press.

Condry, Ian

2006 *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*, Chapter 3: Genba Globalization. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Darling-Wolf, Fabienne

2004 “SMAP, sex, and masculinity: Constructing the perfect female fantasy in Japanese popular music.” *Popular Music and Society* 27(3).

Week 11: WRITING: ESSAY 2 DUE (4-5 pages, double spaced) Draft for final project. Analysis of course materials that will speak to issues in your final project. This will be an opportunity to engage with the issues raised in the readings so far, as they will relate to the topic of your final project. You will be expected to revise this paper, but you may include the same information for your final paper.

WRITING:**DUE December 13, last day class****FINAL PAPER DUE in class (8-10 pages, double spaced)**