Introduction to Japanese Culture

Fall 2017 - 21G.064/21G.592
Prof. Paul Roquet E-mail: proquet@mit.edu
Class: Tuesday/Thursday 11-12:30 in 14N-313
Office Hours: Thursdays 2-4pm at 14N-334
Website: TBD

A critical introduction to Japan's expressive cultures, with a focus on media, society, and cultural history. Taught in English; 21G.592 includes additional work in Japanese. Communications intensive (CI-H).

Objectives

- Understand key contexts and concepts underlying contemporary Japanese culture.
- Critically examine what we talk about when we talk about “Japan.”
- Produce careful written analyses of creative materials and their position in the wider culture.

Required Materials

- All readings and films will be made available via Canvas, Plex, and Kanopy.
- You will also be required to visit the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (free to MIT students) to see the Murakami Takashi exhibition sometime between 10/18-11/8.

Student Responsibilities

1. In-class engagement and participation, including self-introduction (20%)
2. One battle presentation (based on Kyoto University's bibliobattle format) during term (15%)  
3. Weekly online critical responses (CR) (x10, 300-400 words each) (25%)  
5. Paper 2: Research Paper (2500-3000 words, 20%) + Presentation (5%) - Proposal 11/2, Draft 11/28

Each paper will include in-class peer-review. Note: 21G.592 includes an additional short paper written in Japanese, utilizing at least 2 Japanese-language sources.

Schedule

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<th>9/7 R &gt; Introduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>9/12 T &gt;</td>
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<td>9/14 R &gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Kamo no Chômei, “An Account of My Hermitage” (1212, 14p)</td>
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<td>- Nô play: “Dôjôji” (14c?, 16p)</td>
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<td>- Ryôsuke Ôhashi, “Cutting” (1986, 3p)</td>
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<td>In class: Self-introductions 1/4</td>
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<th>9/14 R &gt;</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Naoki Sakai, “‘You Asians’: On the Historical Role of the West and Asia Binary” (2000, 18p)</td>
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<td>In class: Self-introductions 2/4</td>
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| 9/19 T | Excerpts from “Kokutai no hongi [Fundamentals of our national polity]” (1937, 3p)  
Ango Sakaguchi, “Discourse on Decadence” (1946, 5p)  
Ango Sakaguchi, “The Idiot” (1946, 33p)  
In class: Self-introductions 3/4 |
| 9/21 R | Pigs & Battleships (Shōhei Imamura, 1961, 108') [Kanopy]  
In class: Self-introductions 4/4 |
| 9/26 T | Yoshiharu Tsuge, “Chico” (1968, 17p) and “Screw Style” (1968, 23p)  
Ryōko Yamagishi, “Couple of the White Room” (1971, 80p) |
| 9/28 R | Tokyo Drifter (Suzuki Seijun, 1966, 83') [Kanopy]  
Mieko Kanai, “Rabbits” (1976, 17p)  
Yasutaka Tsutsui, “Rumors About Me” (1979, online)  
In class: Mangabattle |
| 10/5 R | AKIRA (Katsuhiro Ōtomo, 1988, 125') [Plex]  
In class: Animebattle |
| 10/10 T | No class (Indigenous People's Day) |
| 10/12 R | Emily Flynn-Jones, “Game Cutification: A Violent History of Gender, Play and Cute Aesthetics” (2013, 19p)  
Lorraine Plourde, "Babymetal and the Ambivalence of Cuteness" (2016, 15p)  
In class: Cinemabattle |
| 10/17 T | Mia Consalvo, "Convergence and Globalization in the Japanese Videogame Industry" (2009, 8p)  
Marc Steinberg, “8-Bit Manga: Kadokawa’s Madara, or, The Gameic Media Mix” (2015, 12p) |
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<th>Date</th>
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• Stephen Snyder, “The Murakami Effect: On the Homogenizing Dangers of Easily Translated Literature” (2016, [online])  
In class: Gamebattle |
| 10/24 T > | • *Japanese Girls at the Harbor* (Hiroshi Shimizu, 1933, 72') [Kanopy] |
• Koichi Iwabuchi, “Undoing Inter-national Fandom in an Age of Brand Nationalism” (2010, 9p)  
In class: Bibliobattle |
| 10/31 T > | • *The Land of Hope* (Sion Sono, 2012, 142') [Plex] |
| 11/2 R > | • Natsuko Fukue, “Aging Japan Faces Dementia Time Bomb” (2017, [online])  
• Eiji Ōtsuka, “Disarming Atom: Tezuka Ozamu’s Manga at War and Peace” (2008, 14p)  
• Yoshimi Shunya, “Radioactive Rain and the American Umbrella” (2012, 12p) |
| 11/7 T > | No meeting - in lieu of class go see Murakami Takashi’s “Lineage of Eccentrics” exhibition at the MFA sometime between 10/18-11/8 |
• Jiying Li, “From Superflat Windows to Facebook Walls: Mobility and Multiplicity of an Animated Shopping Gaze” (2012, 18p)  
**Due in class: Exhibition Report** |
| 11/14 T > | • *Time of Eve: The Movie* (Yasuhiro Yoshiura, 2010, 106') [Plex]  
• Hozumi Ikan, “Souvenirs of Naniwa” (1738, 5p)  
• In class: Guest lecture from Michelle Ho |
### Course Policies

- **Participation**: You are expected to come to class having engaged with the assigned materials carefully and with questions and observations to introduce to the group. As we will be looking very closely at each of the assigned readings, always bring a copy with you to class.
- **Attendance**: Missing more than two class sessions will adversely affect your participation grade. In most cases, make-up work can be arranged if you contact me ahead of time.
- **Late work**: 5% of the grade will be subtracted for every 24 hours late.
- **Academic Honesty**: Consequences for plagiarism can include zero points for the assignment, failure of the course, and suspension. If you are any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of a particular assignment, or whether a source is reliable, contact me. See [https://integrity.mit.edu/](https://integrity.mit.edu/) for official policy.
- **Students with Disabilities**: Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with MIT Student Disabilities Services.

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<th>Date</th>
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| 11/16 R    |                                | Inge Daniels, “Feeling at Home in Contemporary Japan: Space, Atmosphere and Intimacy” (2015, 8p)  
| 11/21 T    |                                | The Taste of Tea (Katsuhito Ishii, 2004, 143’) [Plex]          |
| 11/23 R    |                                | No class (Thanksgiving)                                       |
| 11/28 T    |                                | Larissa MacFarquhar, “Last Call” (2013, [online](#))          
Karin Amamiya, “Suffering Forces Us to Think beyond the Right–Left Barrier” (2010, 14p)  
Aoko Matsuda, “Am I a Doctor?” (2017, 12p) |
| 11/30 R    | Wrap-up / Draft Peer Review    | Due in class: Research Paper Draft (bring 2 print copies)      |

**12/5, 12/7, 12/12, 12/14**: Research Presentations/Workshop