

SP.270 Japanese Animation: Still Pictures, Moving Minds

SP.270 日本のアニメーション: 静止画、色めき立つ心眼

Spring 2004

W 3:30-5:00pm 1-379

M EVE 7:30-10:00pm 4-249

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SP.270 explores Japanese animation, known as anime, and its associated institutions in terms of media theories, aesthetics, and fan cultures. Students analyze significant series; debate over global and local reception, including fan culture growth and function; compare the anime form to other artistic works; and connect anime with contemporary and historical trends in Japan. They examine works by specific directors (Oshii Mamoru, Ishiguro Noboru, Miyazaki Hayao) and studios, supplemented with readings, screenings, and guest speakers from the US and Japan. The course is taught in English.

This seminar 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.

First taught in Spring 2002, SP.270 is offered for the third time through the Experimental Study Group with support from Comparative Media Studies.

∞ Enrollment

Enrollment is initially limited to 25 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.

Objectives

This course is designed to explore each student's academic interest in anime, guided and structured by the core information supplied in lectures, screenings, 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 common styles of anime exist
- Define the differences between Japanese and American/European animation
- Recognize unique and borrowed techniques that are used in anime
- Appreciate anime as a medium and as a cultural product
- Understand the differences between values in fan and academic arenas
- Understand the growth and function of the anime fan culture
- Recognize anime's functions in subculture, mass culture, and high culture
- 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 Centers in 26-139 and 9-250.

Expectations and Grading

Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussion, complete weekly assignments, and present a series analysis. The course is graded P/D/F. While the course is meant to be fun and interactive, it is important that students complete all weekly assignments and present a series analysis to receive a passing grade for the course. The details of each component are given below.

∞ In-Class Participation

Students must attend the lectures and discussion groups. 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. Students are also required to watch all of the anime films presented in the class during screenings. If students must miss a screening, it is expected that they watch independently. Films will be made available either in the Film Office, or at the request of the instructor.

Wednesday classes are almost always lectures with discussion. On some Wednesdays, anime clips or single anime episodes may be watched. Monday evening classes are split between screenings, lectures, guest speakers, and discussion. Please be sure to arrive promptly so that we can start and end class on time.

☞ Weekly Assignments

There will be an assignment almost 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 at least one week in advance. Most of the assignments will make use of the H2O project at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School <<http://h2o.law.harvard.edu/>>, based on the model used by 6.805/6.806/STS.085J <<http://www-swiss.ai.mit.edu/6.805/admin/admin-fall-2003/roisserie.html>>. Students should register with H2O as soon as possible in order to post their assignments.

To access the SP.270 project, browse for the project titled, "MIT SP.270, Spring 2004." You can also access the project by going to <<http://h2o.law.harvard.edu/ViewProject.do?projectId=199>>.

All but two missed assignments must be completed to pass the course.

You must post your responses by the deadlines in order to receive credit for the assignments. The due dates and times are constrained by the roisserie program running on H2O; we cannot grant extensions. If you add the class late, talk to the instructor to promptly arrange to make up alternate assignments.

☞ Homework: Readings and Viewings

Please pick up the supplementary readings as soon as you can, and plan your time accordingly to read and view all of the material. In addition to Susan Napier and Gilles Poitras's works, students will watch *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (1982, 36 episodes). DVDs are available for course use from the MIT Anime Club Library. We have about four copies of each of the nine DVDs. As a result, students may need to form small viewing groups and watch at a mutually-agreed time.

The DVDs of *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross* are provided courtesy of AnimEigo, Inc.

☞ 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 select one or two particular seasons. Alternatively, they may select a pair of seasons in order to compare and contrast plot and character developments. The series must have been released in Japan on or before 1997. For suggestions, contact the staff. A reference sheet with suggestions will be handed out on the second week.

Students should finish watching the series by April 5th. The due date for series analyses is Monday, April 19th, when we will spend class time presenting analyses. You are welcome to come during office hours for trial runs of your presentations.

The presentation will last for fifteen minutes. Up to three 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.

While not required, students are encouraged to create and distribute series abstracts or character sheets to the class. Most non-Japanese viewers have difficulty remembering Japanese names and places; take this as an opportunity to improve your recognition of these. The sheets will also improve your own recollection when speaking in front of a large audience.

Student groups are encouraged to compare notes and ideas between groups, but the final presentations must be wholly their own.

Resources

∞ MIT Anime Club Library

Anime for the course is easily accessible from the MIT Anime Club Library with a Club Membership. Although not required, getting a membership is highly recommended in order to check out materials from the club's vast VHS, DVD, DivX (on CD), CD Audio, and cassette library. Additionally, you will need a membership to checkout the course's Macross DVDs, since they have been placed on reserve with the MIT Anime Club.

During Spring 2004, Anime Club checkouts are conducted at Friday showings, as well as during the library's frequent office hours. Registration costs \$5 per term, with a \$15 refundable deposit for library privileges. Freshmen (Class of 2007) and first-year graduate students get the first term free (either fall or spring of their first year, whichever they register for first). DVD checkouts are available for the academic use of SP.270 students.

Visit any of the showings to register, or register online at <http://web.mit.edu/anime/register/>. More information is available at the website <http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/>. Note that it is difficult to find many series published before 1997 in general circulation, so we strongly recommend that you check materials out from the MIT Anime Club.

∞ 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/>.

∞ Jim Breen's WWWJDIC

Jim Breen, Associate Professor at Monash University, Australia, has created an excellent Japanese-English dictionary server called WWWJDIC. A member of the JDIC/xjdic/MacJDic family of dictionary software, WWWJDIC enables direct web access to various Japanese-English dictionary files. Users can search for Japanese and English words, lookup kanji information, and translate Japanese text into English definitions. This web dictionary may be useful in your studies during this course.

The main web address for WWWJDIC is <<http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/wwwjdic.html>>. A number of worldwide mirrors are available. Additional WWWJDIC tools, including integration with Microsoft Internet Explorer, are posted on the SP.270 website.

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

Poitras, Gilles. *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese in Japanese Animation?* Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1998.
Napier, Susan. *Anime: From Akira to Princess Mononoke*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Press, 2001.

☞ Highly Recommended and Available at Major Online Vendors

Drazen, Patrick. *Anime Explosion! The What? Why? & Wow! of Japanese Animation*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2003.

☞ Recommended and Available at the Coop

Clements, Jonathan and Helen McCarthy. *The Anime Encyclopedia*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.
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.
Martinez, D. P., et. al. *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
Schodt, Frederik. *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996.
Schodt, Frederik. *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics*. Japan: Kodansha International, 1983.
Society of Writers, Editors, and Translators. *Japan Style Sheet*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1998.

☞ Recommended Websites

Anime-Seiyuu Info Page. <<http://www.fanfic.net/~hideaway/seiyuu.htm>>.
Anime Web Turnpike. <<http://www.anipike.com/>>.
AnimEigo. <<http://www.animeigo.com/>>.
Books on Anime, Manga, and their place in Japanese culture. <<http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/books.html>>.
DVD Discussion App. <<http://gormenghast.mit.edu/www/lotr/dvd-app-help.html>>
Hitoshi Doi. <<http://www.tcp.com/doi/>>.
Jim Breen's WWWJDIC. <<http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/wwwjdic.html>>.
MIT Anime Club. <<http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/>>.
Parent's Guide to Anime, A. <<http://www.abcb.com/parents/>>.