

This document lists all of the weekly assignments that you have for SP.270. Since the course is continually being tailored to student needs, assignments may change before the “assigned” date. You are welcome to respond to an assignment in advance; however, please be aware that the staff may change the assignment slightly if circumstances call for it.

Submit all of your assignments in writing in the session that it is due, unless the assignment states that you can submit it via another method.

The length of your assignments may vary widely. For those that require a straightforward response, however, your response will probably not exceed one page, double-spaced. On all assignments, clearly indicate your name, the assignment number, and the pagination if your response exceeds one page.

Assignment 1 (assigned 2/5/2003, due 2/10/2003)

Consider the following scenario. You have a friend who has not seen any Japanese animation, and knows very little about what anime is. You want to introduce this person to anime. If you were to show one contemporary film, TV series, or original animated video (OAV) to this person, which anime would you show? Describe and justify your choice in a few sentences, drawing from what you know, or do not know, about anime.

Respond by Saturday via the DVD Discussion App. After submitting your answer, comment on and respond to at least two of the answers that others gave. For each, suggest why his or her choice is a good or bad one, and whether or not you feel that his or her choice is representative of anime as a whole.

Assignment 2 (assigned 2/12/2003, due 2/18/2003)

≈ Read: Napier 1 (last week) and Napier 2 (this week)

Are manga and anime the same? What are their differences and similarities, and how have they evolved over time? In addition, describe some of the concerns about anime’s “Japanese” or “other-worldly” qualities, using Napier’s text as one of your references.

David Thorburn of CMS has advanced the theory of the consensus medium, arguing that most cultures have a core medium of communication that expresses its shared values and beliefs. See Participatory vs. Broadcast Media, Henry Jenkins, <<http://web.mit.edu/cms/reconstructions/interpretations/particip.html>>, or get a hold of Thorburn’s original papers from the references provided on that webpage. After considering this definition, and the context from which it arose (early 20th century Hollywood film industry), take a stance on whether or not anime represents a consensus medium of Japan as a whole, or of the sphere of Japanese popular culture.

Assignment 3 (assigned 2/18/2003, due 2/24/2003)

- ∞ Read: Ohara <<http://www.laweekly.com/ink/02/07/cover-ohara.php>>, Cirulnick <<http://www.tapanime.com/info/history.html>>, Deneroff (Ladd) <<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue1.5/articles/deneroffladd1.5.html>> Tachikawa <<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue4.06/4.06pages/tachikawatoei/tachikawatoei.php3>>

Astro Boy (鉄腕アトム *Tetsuwan Atomu*) marks a turning point in the history of Japanese popular media, setting the stage for anime as a consensus medium in postwar Japan.

Read *Mighty Tezuka!* by Rika Ohara . Draw from these articles, the discussion in class, and your impressions of the first episode of *Astro Boy* to address the notion of narrative complexity in early Japanese animation. Specifically, what made the episode of *Astro Boy* that we watched so interesting? From what time period does the drawing style come from? What jokes were “throwaways,” and what dialogue was emotionally resonant? How does *Astro Boy* address various thematic issues in its first episode?

For a more complete background on Tezuka’s animation career and his influence, read *History of Anime: Osamu Tezuka*, by Brian Cirulnick at The Anime Powerhouse. This text is optional; be aware that it is not an entirely academic work, so you are cautioned to consider it in light of other sources of information on Tezuka.

A revisit and revision of dates:

- TEZUKA Osamu (手塚治虫), born March 11, 1926, died September 2, 1989
- Referred to in the Japanese media as “manga no kamisama (漫画の神様),” “the God of Comics.”
- Tezuka’s first serialized work: *Shintakarajima* (新宝島, *New Treasure Island*), 1947.
- *Tetsuwan Atomu* (originally *Atomu Taishi*, アトム大使, Apr-1951–Mar-1952) serialized Apr-1952—Mar-1968 in *Shounen* (少年), a monthly boys’ magazine.
- Toei Animation founded 1956; output *The Tale of the White Serpent*, released 22-Oct-1958, as the first Japanese animated film.
- Tezuka’s contract with Toei Animation expired in 1962. He founded Mushi Productions to produce for the television market, which is out of Toei Animation’s target market of film.
- *Tetsuwan Atomu* is Mushi Productions’ first product, and is Japan’s first animated TV series, from 1-Jan-1963 through 31-Dec-1966.
- NBC purchased the American rights, renamed the series *Astro Boy*, and showed it dubbed in English in the US market during the same years (1963-1966).

Assignment 4 (assigned 2/24/2003, due 3/3/2003)

≈ Napier 3, 5, (11 optional for evening)

Based on *Gigantor*, *Gundam*, the readings, and your own anime viewings, hypothesize about the changing nature of the robot in anime, in Japan, and in Japanese culture between 1950 and 1995; that is, up until *Ghost in the Shell* and *Evangelion*. How does anime present the robot? Is the robot a conscious entity? A human? Is the robot to be loved, feared, hated, or trusted? In anime, particularly in *Akira* and *Bubblegum Crisis*, how is the robot connected, and how do the directors make these connections? You may wish to use *The Anime Encyclopedia* to check the production dates of your sources.

In addition, submit your choice of anime series for your series analysis presentation. You can submit this in your weekly assignment paper, or by e-mail. If you have any questions or concerns about acquiring the series, please note it so that we can address it.

Assignment 5+6 (assigned 3/11/2003, due 3/17/2003)

≈ Napier (6 optional), 9

Optional: Eng <<http://www.evaotaku.com/omake/anno.html>>

≈ Read: Kitano (Miyazaki)

<<http://homepage2.nifty.com/nzw/2002stop/02news/020220.html>>

This assignment is combined, but is worth one assignment's point value. Although it is due March 17, you may turn it in as early as March 12, or during office hours; the instructor will grade it and return it to you as soon as possible so that you can use the feedback when working on the series analyses.

We have spent the last couple of weeks analyzing the major themes, iconographies, formal properties, and implications of color in Japanese animation. Consider one short passage of anime (perhaps a few minutes), analyze it with *one* of the frameworks that we have considered, and draw some conclusions. You can pick any passage in any anime you wish. Be sure to cite your exact source and times so that the instructor can also view the same material. Using the DVD Discussion App is recommended but not required, as it will help pinpoint the exact times of the material you are watching. You may do this assignment individually or in groups of two or three (particularly effective when using the DVD Discussion App).

If you choose to analyze Japanese iconography or cultural references, keep Gilles Poitras's *The Anime Companion* handy: a quick read may reveal a lot to you about many of the Japanese references, and may make you question just how *mukokuseki* anime really is.

Come up with at least one good question to ask Neil Nadelman, translator of such famous series as *Irresponsible Captain Tylor*, *Grave of the Fireflies* and *Wings of Honneamise*. Send your questions to the staff at sp.270-staff@; we will compile your questions and send them

to Mr. Nadelman for him to review. (Note, however, that the actual Q&A session will be relatively informal so you can ask him anything you want then.)

Now that you have seen *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross*, you may be aware of anime that evoke the motifs or themes of that series. Sometimes these instances are coincidental; other times, they are bear homage to the contributions that *Macross* gave to Japanese animation. Consider making a list of these references for the rest of the anime that you watch during this course. As an optional exercise, activate the Ishiguro interview Easter egg during episodes 35-36 of *Macross*, to see how significant *Macross* was even while it was in production.

Assignment 7—optional (assigned 3/23/2003, due 3/31/2003)

≈ Read: Napier 10

Yin Chen will be teaching you how to draw in the anime style when we return on 3/31/2003 (note the room change—16-605!). She has asked that students bring in anime pictures and drawings for the session. Come to class prepared with at least one professional anime picture or drawing. You can use a magazine cutout, a printout from the web, cover box art, or anything else with anime characters on it. (A detailed, high-resolution sample is recommended.) Examine the picture in some detail before class. No writing is required, but taking a good look at the picture will allow you to jump right in to the class exercises.

Since this assignment has been assigned late, the instructor will provide extra drawings during class on Monday that you may borrow. However, bringing in your own, pre-selected drawing(s) will give you better results.

Assignment 8 (assigned 4/11/2003, due 4/16/2003)

≈ Read: Napier 8, Anime Interviews (Miyazaki)

Compare and contrast the depiction of two women in two anime series or films. Use Napier's analyses in Chapters 8 and 10.

Alternatively, if you do not wish to use the example series that Napier studies, consider two quintessentially different anime, and compare and contrast them. Choose the first anime from the genre that Napier calls "romantic comedy," which we consider as having a weak-male lead character type. Choose the second anime from those that have an empowered female lead character type, such as many (but not all!) *shoujo* series and films.

Assignment 9 (assigned 4/16/2003, due 4/23/2003)

- ≈ Read: Anime Interviews (Kawamori), Greenfield (Snix: The Otaku), Grassmuck <<http://www.cjas.org/~leng/otaku-e.htm>>, Okada <http://www.j-pop.com/anime/archive/feature/04_gal_999/otaking.html>, Horn (passed out in class)
Optional: Eng <<http://www.cjas.org/~leng/otaku-p.htm>>

Hopefully, Mr. Hiroaki Inoue will be speaking to us either via videoconference or a trip to MIT. He has produced many famous anime films and series, including *Tenchi Muyo! Wings of Honneamise*, and *Perfect Blue*. He is also the chair for WorldCon 2007, a yearly, international science fiction convention that will be held in Japan in 2007. Write two good questions for Hiroaki Inoue, producer at Anime International Corp. (AIC). Please submit two questions that you would like to ask him about making anime, anime markets (both in Japan and internationally), and anything else that you would wish to know during the discussion. You can search for “Hiroaki Inoue” online to get further details on his work.

Inoue-san’s work list is available on the SP.270 website, but because it is a private document, you need MIT certificates to view it. To view it, visit <<https://web.mit.edu/sp.270/www/secure/>>.

If you go to AnimeBoston, write about your experiences at the convention with respect to the fan culture.

Assignment 10 (assigned 4/23/2003, due 4/28/2003)

- ≈ Read: Napier Appendix

Do you agree with Napier’s findings on American anime fandom in this appendix? How does “the profile of the anime fan” and “what attracts viewers to anime” compare with your own experience? How do they compare with your perception of other American anime fans? How do they compare with your perception of other fans at MIT?

These are deep questions that you may wish to expound upon in great detail. However, I do not expect a response greater than one page *single-spaced* (two pages double-spaced), unless you really enjoy writing meaningfully on this topic. If you find yourself doing so, you may wish to propose further study of your ideas as a paper topic.

Assignment 11 (assigned 5/7/2003, due 5/12/2003)

Last question may deal with the cultural identity of anime itself, and the cultural identity of American anime fans. Now that we’ve learned all of this, how would you define what anime is? Does your opinion about what you would suggest changed as a result of learning all of this? What is the cultural identity that anime asserts? What is the cultural identity (identities) that American anime fans assert or represent compared to general fandom in America, or American society, especially now that anime is increasingly more mainstream (as we have seen last week)?