

Monsters, Ghosts and the Making of Modern Japan

Section A

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Course Outline / Description

The Japanese popular imagination has always been haunted by myriad monsters, ghost, demons, and goblins that have always both frightened and entertained. But these are by no means the only two roles that such creatures have played in Japanese history. In this class we will study the many ways that monsters and ghosts have symbolized and personified the issues, problems, hopes and fears that have shaped modern Japan. We will begin by looking at the importance of the horrific and grotesque in the creation of Japanese popular culture in the 17th century. We will then discuss how 19th century Meiji modernizers created the scientific study of “monsterology” to debunk peasant superstition and to redirect supernatural belief toward a divine emperor. We will also examine how artists like Kawanabe Kyōsai, and writers such as Izumi Kyōka used monsters and ghosts to both resist and satirize modernization. We end the first half of the semester by looking at how the Western observer Lafcadio Hearn used Japanese ghost stories to feed a foreign appetite for images of a mysterious Orient. Of course, this class will also examine modern uses of monsters and ghosts. We will begin the second half of the semester by examining how manga author Mizuki Shigeru used yōkai to help provide continuity with the past in a postwar Japan that had been torn from its traditions. We will discuss the political origins of Godzilla and read manga by authors such as Hino Hideshi and Umezu Kazuo who used horror to express their anxieties about the state of Japanese society in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The course will finish with a look at recent Japanese TV and movie monsters from adult horror films like *The Ring* to popular children’s animation like *Pokémon*. Our main concerns will be what such media say about Japan today, and how their popularity abroad shapes foreign preceptions of the country.

Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students will be able to explain and discuss many of the social, economic and political conditions that have shaped Japanese history and identity from ancient times to the modern day. They will also learn a great deal about Japanese, folklore, religion, art and popular culture, and be able to recognize the socio-political subtexts that inform them.

Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials

Tues. 9/1 Course Introduction: Why Study Monsters?
Zoom Class:

Thurs. 9/3 **Recorded Zoom Lecture (link to be provided via email)**

On-Demand: **Reading Assignment:** (1) and (2) “Introduction” from *Japanese Ghosts and Demons* by Akira Yamamoto and “Tengu, the Mountain Goblin” by Pat Fister, from *Japanese Ghosts and Demons*.

Tues. 9/8 **Reading Assignment:** (7) “Natural History of the Weird” from
Zoom Class: *Pandemonium and Parade* by Michael Dylan Foster, (the section on

Toriyama Sekien beginning on page 107 is most important).

- Thurs. 9/10 **Recorded Zoom Lecture (link to be provided via email)**
 On-Demand: **Reading Assignment:** (10) “One Hundred Demons and One Hundred Supernatural Tales” by Midori Deguchi from *Japanese Ghosts and Demons*.
- Tues. 9/15** **Reading Assignment:** (12) “Kuniyoshi’s Minamoto Raikō and the Earth
Zoom Class: Spider: Demons and Protest in Late Tokugawa Japan” by Melinda Takeuchi in *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 17.
- Thurs. 9/17: **Watch:** *Yotsuya Kaidan Anime* and leave a comment on the “Discussion
 On-Demand: Board” on Blackboard.
Yotsuya Kaidan is available on vimeo.com:
<https://vimeo.com/440505670>
Reading Assignment: (8) “Vengeful Spirits,” from *Archetypes in Japanese Film*, by Gregory Barrett
- Tues. 9/22** **Monster Presentations 1 and 2**
Zoom Class: **Reading Assignment:** (14) “Science of the Weird,” from *Pandemonium and Parade* by Michael Dylan Foster.
- Thurs. 9/24 **Recorded Zoom Lecture (link to be provided via email)**
 On-Demand: **Reading Assignment:** (17) *The Legends of Tono*, by Yanagita Kunio.
- Tues. 9/29** **Monster Presentations 3 and 4**
Zoom Class: **Reading Assignment:** (20) “Of Ghosts and Goblins,” by Lafcadio Hearn from *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*.
- Thurs. 10/1 **Watch:** “Mimi-nashi Hoichi” segment of the film *Kwaidan*, 1964, and leave
 On-Demand: a comment on the “Discussion Board” on Blackboard.
Mimi-nashi Hoichi is available on vimeo.com:
<https://vimeo.com/433492180>
Reading Assignment: (23) and (24) “Reconciliation” by Lafcadio Hearn, from *Shadowings* and “The Story of Mimi-nashi Hoichi” and “Yuki Onna,” by Lafcadio Hearn from *Kwaidan*.
- Tues. 10/6** **Monster Presentations 5 and 6**
Zoom Class: **Reading Assignment:** (25) “The Human Chair” and “The Caterpillar” From *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, by Edogawa Rampo.
- Thurs. 10/8 **Quiz 1:**
 On-Demand: Available in the “Assignments” section of Blackboard for 24 hours 11:59 PM October 7 to 11:59 PM October 8 *Japan Time*.

Tues. 10/13 **Monster Presentations 7 and 8**

Zoom Class: **Reading Assignment:** (26) Butoh: 'Twenty Years Ago We Were Crazy, Dirty and Mad,' *The Drama Review*: TDR, Vol. 30, No. 2.

Thurs. 10/15 **Recorded Zoom Lecture (link to be provided via email)**

On-Demand: **Reading Assignment:** (27) "Momotaro (The Peach Boy) and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism of the Early Shōwa Age" by Klaus Antoni, in *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1

Tues. 10/20 **Monster Presentations 9-15**

Zoom Class:

Thurs. 10/22 **Watch:** *Gojira* (Godzilla), Honda Ishirō, dir., 1954, and leave a comment on the "Discussion Board" on Blackboard.

Gojira is available on vimeo.com

<https://vimeo.com/399883201>

Reading Assignment: (28) "The Birth of Gojira," from *Godzilla on My Mind*, by William Tsutsui.

Tues. 10/27 **Monster Presentations 16 and 17**

Zoom Class: **Reading Assignment:** (29) "The Godzilla Franchise" from *Godzilla on My Mind*, by William Tsutsui.

Additional Resources: (30) "Understanding the Monster," from

Thurs. 10/29 **Watch** *GeGeGe no Kitaro*, 2008, and leave a comment on the "Discussion Board" on Blackboard.

GeGeGe no Kitaro is available on vimeo.com:

<https://vimeo.com/439892872>

Reading Assignment: (31) *Ge Ge Ge no Kitarō and the Goblin Castle* (manga), by Mizuki Shigeru.

Tues. 11/3 **Monster Presentations: 18 and 19**

Zoom Class: **Reading Assignment:** (35.1) "Media of the Weird," from *Pandemonium and Parade* by Michael Dylan Foster.

Thurs. 11/5 **Watch:** *The Suicide Charge that Kitaro Saw (Kitarō ga Mita*

On-Demand: *Gyokusai*), 2007, and leave a comment on the "Discussion Board" on Blackboard.

The Suicide Charge that Kitaro Saw is available on vimeo.com

<https://vimeo.com/446111939>

Reading Assignment: (34) "Monstrous Loss: The Dismemberment and Reanimation of the National Body in Japanese War and Horror Manga," by Mark Hollstein.

Tues. 11/10	<u>Monster Presentations 20 and 21</u>
Zoom Class:	<u>Reading Assignment:</u> (32) “Haunted Travelogue: Hometowns, Ghost Towns and Memories of War,” by Michael D. Foster, in <i>Mechademia</i> , Volume 4.
Thurs. 11/12	Quiz 2
On-Demand:	Available in the “Assignments” section of Blackboard for 24 hours 11:59 PM November 11 to 11:59 PM November 12 <u><i>Japan Time</i></u>.
Tues. 11/17	<u>Monster Presentations 22 and 23</u>
Zoom Class:	<u>Reading Assignment:</u> (35) and (36) “Unusual Fetus: My Baby” from <i>Lullabies from Hell</i> by Hino Hideshi and <i>The Drifting Classroom, Chapters 1 & 3</i> by Umezu Kazuo.
Thurs. 11/19	<u>Watch:</u> <i>Uzumaki</i> , Higuchinsky, dir. 2000, and leave a comment on the
On-Demand:	“Discussion Board” on Blackboard. <i>Uzumaki</i> is available on vimeo.com: https://vimeo.com/manage/433504320/general <u>Reading Assignment:</u> (38) “The Spiral Obsession,” in <i>Uzumaki</i> , by Ito Junji.
Tues. 11/24	<u>Monster Presentations 24 and 25</u>
Zoom Class:	<u>Reading Assignment:</u> (39) “Spiraling into Apocalypse” by Jay McRoy From <i>Nightmare Japan</i> .
Thurs. 11/26	<u>Watch:</u> <i>Ringu</i> , Nakata Hideo, dir. 1998, and leave a comment on the
On-Demand:	“Discussion Board” on Blackboard. <i>Ringu</i> is available on vimeo.com: https://vimeo.com/433506204 <u>Reading Assignment:</u> (40) “Ghosts of the Present, Specters of the Past: <i>Kaidan</i> and the Haunted Family in the Cinema of Nakata Hideo and Shimizu Takashi” from <i>Nightmare Japan: Japanese Contemporary Horror Cinema</i> , by Jay McRoy.
Tues. 12/1	<u>Monster Presentations 26 and 27</u>
Zoom Class:	<u>Reading Assignment:</u> (41) “Floating Water” from <i>Dark Water</i> by Suzuki Koji.
Thurs. 12/3	<u>Watch:</u> <i>Jellyfish Eyes</i> and leave a comment on the “Discussion Board” on
On-Demand:	Blackboard. <i>Jellyfish Eyes</i> is Available on vimeo.com: https://vimeo.com/439862409
Tues. 12/8	<u>Monster Presentations 28 and 29</u>
Zoom Class:	<u>Reading Assignment</u> (47) “Skulls and Flowers” by David Pilling._
Thurs 12/10	<u>Monster Presentations 30 and 31</u>

Zoom Class: **Reading Assignment:** (44) “Pokemon: Getting Monsters and Communicating Capitalism” from *Millenial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, by Anne Allison.
(Class will be recorded for those who cannot attend live)

Tues. 12/15 **Final Quiz:**
On-Demand: Available in the “Assignments” section of Blackboard for 24 hours 11:59 PM December 14 to 11:59 PM December 15 Japan Time.

Textbooks/Reading Materials

All reading assignments will be available in the “Reading Assignments” folder in the “Assignments” section of Blackboard. They can be downloaded and printed or read online. The number in parentheses beside each reading assignment in this syllabus [for example: (44) “Pokemon: Getting Monsters and Communicating Capitalism”] corresponds to the number of the reading as listed in the reading folder.

Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric

Quiz 1: 20 percent
Quiz 2: 20 percent
Quiz 3: 20 percent
Participation: 10 percent
Class Presentation: 15 percent
Presentation Essay: 15 Percent

Quizzes:

Three quizzes will be given over the course of the semester; they will be comprised of about 30 true-or-false and multiple-choice questions as well as one short answer question which will require you to write about one full paragraph. You will have 70 minutes to complete each quiz. The quizzes will be available in the “Assignments” section of Blackboard for a 24-hour period on the quiz day. Please remember that all given dates and times are for Japan Standard Time.

Participation:

Your participation grade will be determined by both your attendance and participation in all Zoom classes, as well as your participation in the required Discussion Board comment assignments regarding class films.

Monster Presentation:

You will be required to make a brief (about 5-7 minutes) presentation to the class on a particular monster of your choice. Two or more students will make a presentation at the beginning of most class periods. A sign-up list with possible presentation dates will be made available to students early in the semester. Your presentation may be about any supernatural being as long as it is Japanese in origin. In other words, you can choose to explain one of the hundreds of traditional *yōkai*, any ghostly character from folklore or even a ghost/monster from a contemporary Japanese monster movie, television show, J-horror film, manga or anime. Your presentation should include visual aids such as (but not limited to) PowerPoint slides containing images relevant to your topic. You must also provide a list

of sources that you used in preparing your presentation.

Presentation Paper:

You must write up the information you provide in your presentation in the form of a double-spaced typed, four to six-page paper. The paper is due at the end of the semester; however, you may turn it in at any time after your class presentation. Both your presentation and essay should explain the basic physical and psychological characteristics of your monster or ghost as well as other basic information such as from where the creature came; what kind of social situation may have engendered it or what social or psychological fears it might represent or what societal role it might play; the period or years it was popular or prevalent; how it evolved over time; its special characteristics or powers and from where these powers come; the kinds of media it appears in; how you can protect yourself from its powers; how it is related to other kinds of Japanese or foreign ghosts or monsters, etc. You should also include some of your own reaction to it such as why you picked it; what about it is interesting or important to you? You must reference your sources in the text of your paper and provide a works cited page that includes a full citation at the end.