

Japanese Aesthetics

Semester 2 2022

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Course Description

Japanese aesthetics is a seminar that explores pre-modern and modern Japanese concepts of “beauty” through literary, performing, and visual arts. A variety of artistic mediums—literature, music, theatre, tea ceremony and more—will be examined through which students will explore the construction of pre-modern and modern aesthetic concepts: notably *okashi*, *mono no aware*, *jō-ha-kyū*, *yūgen*, *wabi*, *sabi*, realism, and *kawaii*. Each of these concepts will be placed in their broader respective cultural parameters to illustrate their connection to and derivation from larger ideas such as nature, good and bad, gender, nationalism, and globalism.

Course Objectives

Through this class, students will acquire an understanding of the Japanese aesthetic values that have come to represent Japanese arts on the global stage. At the same time, however, the class will also explore how the presence of these concepts in historical time continues to shape culture in a continuing dialectic relationship.

Course Requirements and Assignments

- a. Active class participation: This class is a seminar, and thus discussion is a vital aspect of the learning process. Students will be evaluated on the quality of their observations and responses to the questions posed. Participation is vital as is attendance. To receive an “A”, students must attend all sessions and participate in a way that reflects careful reflection on the topics. Consideration for classmates is also necessary. Another component of participation is writing one discussion question for each reading to be shared in class.
- b. Assignments: Each topic will be covered for a period of one to two weeks. At the end of each, the students will be presented with a question to be answered in writing. The answers will of course reflect class content, but more importantly is the student’s engagement with and critical response to the ideas presented.
- c. Final presentation and paper: The students may choose any topic related to Japanese aesthetics for their final project. Before beginning the final paper, they will present their work to their classmates for critical feedback and suggestions for twenty minutes. After having received insights and suggestions, they will write an eight to ten-page paper on the chosen topic.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading

Grading:

1. Participation and Discussion	30%
2. Assignments	30%
3. Final Presentation	20%
4. Final Paper	20%

Additional Information: Classroom Policies

1. Attendance will be taken. It is to your benefit to attend and participate in all classes.
2. Discussion is an integral part of this class. If students do not participate or come to class not having read that week’s materials in preparation to participate, their evaluation will reflect this.

3. Let me know if there is an emergency that prevents you from attending class.
4. Electronic devices of any sort are not permitted.
5. Neither food nor drink is permitted in the classroom.
6. Sleeping is not permitted in class and students will be marked as absent.
7. Plagiarism, cheating, or helping other to cheat is not tolerated. Plagiarism is defined as misrepresenting the work of others as your own. Any information of any sort—facts, statistics, quotations, or paraphrasing—must be cited. Any instance of plagiarism will result in a failing grade.

Make-up policy: If you are absent and wish to make up an assignment, it is your responsibility to contact me and make arrangements.

Course Materials

Single chapters from books and journal articles will be provided by the instructor. Additional reading may be assigned.

Hume, Nancy G. ed. *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995.

Ikegami, Eiko. *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*. Cambridge, 2005.

Juniper, Andrew. *Wabi Sabi: the Japanese Art of Impermanence*. Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2003.

Levinson, Jerrold, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Marra, Michael. *Essays on Japan: Between Aesthetics and Literature*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Ohnuki-Tierny, Emiko. *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Saito, Yuriko. *Everyday Aesthetics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Shirane, Haruo. *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Surak, Kristin. *Making Tea, Making Japan: Cultural Nationalism in Practice*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro and Jaffe, Richard. *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Tanizaki, Jun'ichiro. *In Praise of Shadows*. Stony Creek, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1977.

Yano, Christine. *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Yoda, Tomiko. *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Constructions of Japanese Modernity*. Durhan & London: Duke University Press, 2004.

Writing Guide

For your essays, you may write about ANY aspect of *Japanese Aesthetics* that stimulates and excites you. Of great importance, however, is that these essays are to be exercises in critical thinking. As such, it is obligatory that you tell your reader why you wish to discuss your chosen topic, what significance it has for understanding Japanese culture, what approach you shall take in your analysis, why you have chosen this approach, and what you hope to contribute to the understanding of *Japanese Aesthetics* with this topic. You are to create a cogent, coherent argument that reflects your engagement with critical thought. The essay must have an intellectual gravity that demonstrates your abilities as a creative, articulate thinker with insights deeper than, ‘Dude, that was, like, majorly awesome!’

General comments on essay writing:

The most important part of essay writing is to answer the question that you have created. If you have chosen to discuss the aesthetics of gender fluidity in glam rock, what is it that you want to say and why? What is your question? Consider your question carefully. What does it ask you to do? Keep this in mind as you research the issue, as you plan your essay, and as you write it. Refer to the question again as you edit your essay. And when you are reading your draft, keep asking yourself: have I answered the question (or have I instead gone off on a tangent that was interesting, on which I could easily find information, or which I was dragged into by one of the authors I read, and would I rather be answering this question rather than the one I initially chose?)?

Researching and writing essays is a central part of all Humanities and Social Sciences courses. For some of you this will be a relatively new type of assessment, and you are encouraged to consult with me throughout your research and the writing process should you need advice. For this course, you are required to write essays that are analytical as well as descriptive. This requires serious engagement with your source material. There are numerous guides to essay writing and referencing, and if you are not already an experienced essay writer you should consider acquiring such a guide. Some basic guidelines follow.

- Research: this involves the selection and collection of relevant materials. Take notes that include the important elements of what you are reading: concepts, ideas, details of events and other descriptive information, as well as quotations or paraphrased summaries, which relate to your topic. You need to be very familiar with the library and its databases to find relevant material. You also need to be very careful when taking notes to clearly mark what is your summary and what is copied word for word from the source itself (this is to avoid plagiarism).
- Planning your essay: your sources and relevant information must be organized. Draw up a one or two page plan of the essay using headings and sub-headings.
- Writing the essay: remember that you are analysing, evaluating, criticizing and arguing, not just summarizing and describing. You are not only trying to answer the question in a structured fashion, but to engage critically with the question and with your sources. Make sure that you substantiate your analysis throughout the essay. Generalizations need to be supported with specific information and examples. It is useful to start with an introduction, which devotes a paragraph or two to:
 - a) noting what question you are answering
 - b) explaining how you intend to answer it, and
 - c) very generally pointing to the direction of your answer

The essay should also have a conclusion: this is a final paragraph that brings together the various themes or elements of the essay.

Footnotes and bibliography:

Footnotes and bibliographies must be in Chicago style. (You can use the following link: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>) Essays with inadequate footnoting will not be accepted, and will have to be resubmitted.

The following points are important:

- Footnotes must be at the bottom of each page, NOT at the end of the essay (these are called ‘endnotes’, not footnotes). Note that there are several different styles of footnoting, and that different disciplines use different styles (historians, sociologists, linguists, literature scholars etc, all use different styles to conform to international conventions in their field). It is important that you conform to the style of your field.
- Footnotes should be used to indicate the source of all direct quotations, and the source of ideas and arguments you are advancing. The convention is that you quote directly from primary sources predominantly. In the case of secondary sources, it is more usual to use the footnote to indicate the source of idea or arguments that you will have summarised (although it is possible to quote from secondary sources as well).
- You should also use footnotes for all information and ideas not your own, or not widely known, or if the interpretation or information is contentious in some fashion. If all the information and ideas in a particular paragraph are from the same source, then one footnote at the end of the paragraph is sufficient. *Ordinarily, almost every paragraph in your essay will have at least one footnote – except for the introduction and conclusion and any paragraphs that are primarily based on your own observations.*
- you must include a **bibliography** at the end of your essay which lists, in alphabetical order of author or editor’s surname, all works which you have substantially used in your essay. The bibliography will include all works cited in the footnotes, and may also include other items on which you have drawn in the research for your essay.

Note: essays without footnotes or with limited footnotes are unlikely to pass. Essays missing bibliographies will be sent back.

Writing standards:

Your essay must be written in clear, error-free English. You may lose marks if it is not, and essays with a great amount of spelling or grammatical mistakes will be returned for resubmission. If you need help with essay writing, please come and talk to me.

Non-discriminatory language:

You must use non-discriminatory language in all your work. Discriminatory language is that which refers in abusive terms to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, citizenship or nationality, ethnic or language background, physical or mental ability, or political or religious views, or which stereotypes groups in an adverse manner that is not supported by evidence. This is not meant to preclude or inhibit legitimate academic debate on any issue; however, the language used in such debate should be non-discriminatory and sensitive to these matters.

Extensions:

The papers are to be submitted the week they are due (refer to the syllabus for the dates), either in class or through e-mail. Extensions for written work will only be granted in special circumstances. Unless an extension has been granted, late essays will be penalized at the rate of 5% for the first day and 2% off the mark per day after that.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of presenting somebody else's words as your own. Not providing adequate footnoting, not putting quotes in quotation marks, and paraphrasing another author's words constitute plagiarism. Be warned that instances of plagiarism are easily recognizable, and that scholars and academic institutions take a very dim view of it. You have also signed the "Terms of Participation Form" and should also be aware of Columbia University's code of Academic Conduct to which you are all expected to adhere.

If you have any doubts on the subject, consult with me.

Summary: what is a good essay/document exercise?

Written assessments generally get high marks if:

1. they answer the question (with originality and reflexivity is even better)
2. they are based on the best and most wide-ranging research
3. the arguments are supported throughout with good evidence
4. the footnotes and the bibliography are complete and in good order
5. they are well presented (grammar, spelling, punctuation are perfect!)

Final Presentation/Paper Guide

The purpose of the presentation/paper is to allow you to explore areas of Japanese music that stimulate and interest you, to delve into areas that have not been covered in class. The given topic of J-pop should not be taken as the only subject you are allowed to explore—explore anything and everything that excites your interest. The only requirement is that the research topic be music and has something to do with Japan.

There are two distinct aspects to this project: the presentation and the ensuing paper. The presentation is to be an informal exposé in which you present your findings to the class as a whole. The duration of the presentation will follow academic conference standards, and is to be twenty minutes per person followed by ten-minute questions and answers period. Think of the presentation as a lecture, a performance, a moment for you to speak directly to your colleagues about your work. Expect discussion. You may either read your paper, or refer to notes, or handouts. You are also welcome to use Powerpoint slides and the audio-visual facilities available in the classrooms to illustrate points made in the paper. Should you have materials you wish to distribute to the class, please provide me with a copy the previous class session so that I may make copies.

The paper is separate from the presentation and is to be a formal written exercise with citations, footnotes, and bibliography. Please follow the Chicago Manual of Style for formatting. The length should be approximately 12 pages double-spaced, which is roughly 3000 words in 12-point Times New Roman font.

In your presentation/paper, you are to identify and discuss an issue that interests you about the music you have selected. If, for example, you have decided to examine Japanese *enka*, you must have something to say beyond, "it's cheesy!" or "those dresses Kobayashi Sachiko wears for the *Kōhaku uta gassen* are so cool!" There are any number of different, simultaneously occurring aspects of *enka* that can be used to make this music relevant and interesting to even those, such as myself, who find it trying at best. What is being promoted through *enka*? Why do the majority of performers wear *kimono*? Why do so many *enka* texts dwell on the concept of *urusato* or drinking alone in shabby bars? If you should decide on J-pop, or jazz in Japan, a similar list of stimulating issues exists: for example, Japanese pop has undeniably influenced other East Asian popular musics. Is this good? Is this bad? Why is it important? Japanese jazz: is it derivative? Or is it a form of jazz distinct to Japan

that conforms to a different aesthetic than American jazz? What does this say about music and migration? There is no limit to what you can explore in your project. Draw upon your experience in other classes to enrich your work.

You are encouraged and expected to turn to secondary sources for guidance and background information. You may not base your argument on the work of others. If you agree with another scholar's opinion, by all means say so, and there is nothing wrong per se, but how does your work further the earlier scholar's work? As mentioned above, any references or citations must be properly included in the body of the work following the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines. This is also true of on-line sources, which must be cited in your bibliography. Please be aware that not all on-line sources are reliable or exemplary scholarship.

The dates of the presentations are indicated in the syllabus. The papers are due on the day of the final examination.

Schedule

Please note: this is subject to change.

All readings and assignments should be completed by the date under which they appear.

Part 1: Introduction

Lesson 1:

Topic: Confusion!

Lesson 2:

Topic: Course introduction

Part 2: The Japanese Aesthetic Tradition

Lesson 3:

Topic: introduction to aesthetics

Read: "Philosophical Aesthetics: an Overview", Levinson, Jerrold, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford University Press, 2003

Lesson 4:

Topic: The Japanese aesthetic tradition

Read. W. M. Theodore de Vary, "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics I, in Nancy G. Hume, ed., *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, pp. 45-50.

Lesson 5:

Topic: The Japanese aesthetic tradition

Read. W. M. Theodore de Vary, "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics II and III, in Nancy G. Hume, ed., *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, pp. 50-62, 69-76.

Lesson 6:

Topic: The beginnings of the Japanese aesthetic tradition. The Construction of the Seasons (Part 1)

Read: "Kana Preface", *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Literature*.

Translated and Annotated by Helen Craig McCullough.

Submit précis no. 1: Create a list of the aesthetic terms covered in the reading thus far with carefully detailed definitions.

Lesson 7:

Topic: The Construction of the Seasons (Part 2)

Read: Haruo Shirane, "Introduction" and "Poetic Topics and the Making of the Four Seasons," in *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons*, pp. 1-55.

Lesson 8:

Topic: The Construction of the Seasons (Part 3)

Read: Haruo Shirane, "Interiorization, Flowers, and Social Ritual, in *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons*, pp. 89-112, and "History, Genre, Social Community" in *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons*, pp. 201-219.

Lesson 9:

Topic: Women and Japanese literary aesthetics (Part 1)

Read: Donald Keene, “Feminine Sensibility in the Heian Era”, in Hume, pp. 109-123. Tomiko Yoda, “Introduction,” in *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Construction of Japanese Modernity*, pp. 1-25.

Submit: First written response.

Lesson 10:

Topic: Woman and Japanese literary aesthetics (Part 2)

Read: Tomiko Yoda, “The Feminization of Heian and Eighteenth-Century Poetics,” in *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Construction of Japanese Modernity*, pp. 25-40, “Epilogue” in *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Construction of Japanese Modernity*, pp. 214-230.

Lesson 11:

Topic: *Yūgen*, Zeami and the Aesthetics of the Theatre (part 1)

Read: Ortolani, Benito. Chapter Six, “Nohgaku”, in *The Japanese Theatre*.

Submit précis no. 2: Yoda introduction.

Lesson 12:

Topic: *Yūgen*, Zeami and the Aesthetics of the Theatre (part 2)

Read: Ortolani, Benito. Chapter Six, “Nohgaku”, in *The Japanese Theatre*.

View: *Kanawa*

Lesson 13:

Topic: *Wabi, Sabi, and the Aesthetics of Simplicity* (part 1)

Read: Juniper, Andrew: “History”, in *Wabi Sabi: the Japanese Art of Impermanence*.

Submit: Second written response.

Lesson 14:

Topic: *Wabi, Sabi, and the Aesthetics of Simplicity* (part 2)

Read: Juniper, Andrew: “Culture”, in *Wabi Sabi: the Japanese Art of Impermanence*.

Part 3: The Edo Period, the Formation of the Public, and Nationalism

Lesson 15:

Topic: Midterm!

Lesson 16:

Topic: The Establishment of Public Aesthetics (Part 1)

Read: Ikegami Eiko. “Introduction: Aesthetic Japan and the Tokugawa Networks” in *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*, p. 3 – 18, and “Tokugawa State Formation and the Transformation of Aesthetic Publics” in *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*, pp. 127-139.

Submit: your proposals for your final project on this day!

Submit précis no. 3: Juniper.

Lesson 17:

Topic: The Establishment of Public Aesthetics (Part 2)

Read: Ikegami Eiko. “Tacit Modes of Communication and Japanese National Identity” in *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*, pp. 221-235, and “The Rise of Aesthetic Japan” in *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*, pp. 363-385.

Lesson 18:

Topic: Modernity, War, Nationalism, and the Creation of Art (Part 1)

Read: Kristin Surak, "Introduction", in *Making Tea, Making Japan: Cultural Nationalism in Practice*, pp. 1-16.

Lesson 19:

Topic: Modernity, War, Nationalism, and the Creation of Art (Part 2)

Read: Kristin Surak, "Creating Tea: The National Transformation of a Cultural Practice, in *Making Tea, Making Japan: Cultural Nationalism in Practice*, pp. 57-90.

Submit précis no. 4: Ikegami introduction.

Lesson 20:

Topic: Modernity, War, Nationalism, and the Creation of Art (Part 3)

Read: Philip Flavin, "Tateyama Noboru (1876-1926): Osaka, Modernity and Bourgeois Musical Realism for the Koto," *Music, modernity and locality in interwar Japan: Osaka and beyond*, edited Hugh de Ferranti and Alison Tokita, Ashgate Press, pp. 135-155. Philip Flavin, "Colonial Japan and Modern Music for the Koto", *The World of Music*, special issue vol. 1-2012, pp. 105-142.

Lesson 21:

Topic: Modernity, War, Nationalism, and the Creation of Art (Part 4)

Read: Emiko Ohnuki-Tierny, "The Militarization of Cherry Blossoms: Cherry Blossoms as the Souls of Fallen Soldiers," in *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History*, pp. 102-124.

Submit: Third written response.

Lesson 22:

Topic: Modernity, War, Nationalism, and the Creation of Art (Part 4)

Read: Ohnuki-Tierny, Emiko. *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History*.

Part 4: *Kawaii*

Lesson 23:

Topic: *Kitsch and Kawaii* (Part 1)

Read: Sianne Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-garde," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (Summer 2005), pp. 811-847.

Submit précis no. 5: Ohnuki introduction.

Lesson 24:

Topic: *Kitsch and Kawaii* (Part 2)

Read: Janice Brown, "Re-framing Kawaii: Interrogating Global Anxieties Surrounding the Aesthetic of "Cute" in Japanese Art and Consumer Products", in *The International Journal of the Image*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (2011), pp. 1-10.

Lesson 25:

Topic: *Kitsch and Kawaii* (Part 3)

Read: Yano, Christine. "Introduction: Kitty—Japan—Global" in *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 1-42

Submit précis no. 6: Ngai.

Lesson 26:

Topic: *Kitsch and Kawaii* (Part 4)

Read: Yano, Christine. "Japan' Cute-Cool as Global Wink" in *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 252-268.

Part 5: Final Presentations

Lesson 27:

Topic: Final Presentations

Submit: Fourth written response.

Lesson 28:

Topic: Final Presentations

Lesson 29:

Topic: Final Presentations