

Documenting Japan

Film and Photography as Cultural Description

Section 1

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【Course Outline / Description】

We have often heard the phrases “the camera never lies,” “seeing is believing” and “a picture is worth a thousand words.” This course provides an introduction to the field of visual anthropology, with a focus on documentary films and photographic projects. Visual anthropology strives to visualize the invisible – knowledge, values, morals, beliefs, perceptions, capabilities and private spaces. In this course, films and photography dealing with Japan will be examined, analyzed and evaluated in terms of providing understanding of Japanese culture. Culture has often been likened to an iceberg; we can only see the tip and perhaps the most important aspects are submerged and difficult to see. Who constructs visual images, for what purpose and in what context will also be of concern. The theoretical focus of the course will be on the issues and consequences of visual representation; methodology and technique will also be discussed. The course provides visual cultural descriptions on such topics as traditional culture, popular culture, education, art, entertainment, sports, religion, gender, politics and globalization.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

Students will be able to analyze and evaluate visual representations of culture, especially in the Japanese context. Students will be able to demonstrate technical, methodological and theoretical aspects of visual anthropology and ethnographic photography.

Student participation (class discussions and analyses of photos, films and other images) is especially important in this course. Please do the readings in advance of the class and be ready to be a active participant.

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

Lecture 1 First Day of Class – Introduction to Course

Part I: Getting started in visual anthropology

Lecture 2 Portrait Exercise

Lecture 3 Film and discussion: Japanland (Muller, 2006)

RECOMMENDED READING Sugimoto: An Introduction to Japanese Society –AND– Muller Japanland

Lecture 4 How to do anthropology in Japan

READ Befu An Ethnography of Dinner Entertainment in Japan

-AND- T. Bestor Inquisitive Observation

RECOMMENDED READING: V. Bestor Digital Resources and Fieldwork

Lecture 5 Film and discussion: Neighborhood Tokyo (Bestor, 1992)

Lecture 6 Ethics and Shooting Culture in Japan
READ: Fedorowicz Shooting Culture in Japan

Lecture 7 What is Visual Anthropology?
READ: Mead Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words
-AND- Grimshaw The Ethnographers Eye
Video and Discussion: Sense of Vision (BBC, 2003)

Lecture 8 Visual Anthropology (pt. 2)
READ MacDougall The Visual in Anthropology
-AND- Morphy and Banks Rethinking Visual Anthropology
Film and Discussion: The Couple in the Cage (Heredia and Fusco, 1993)

Lecture 9 Visual Anthropology (pt. 3)
READ <http://visualanthropologyofjapan.blogspot.jp/2007/05/its-visual-but-is-it-anthropology.html>

Lecture 10 Midterm review activities
READ (REVIEW) all previous class readings

Part II: Photography

Lecture 11 Photography
READ Sontag On Photography – In Plato's Cave

Lecture 12 Film and discussion: Annie Leibovitz: Life through a Lens (Leibovitz, 2008)

Lecture 13 Photography (pt. 2)
READ Scherer Ethnographic Photography in Anthropological Research
Short videos: Worlds in Motion (Thomas Hoepker), Bruce Gilden,
Tokyo Love Hello (Chris Steele-Perkins)

Lecture 14 Two-Frame Photo Story presentations

Lecture 15 Two-Frame Photo Story presentations

Lecture 16 Japanese Photography READ Fraser

Lecture 17 The Visual Anthropology of Deaf Communities in Japan
READ Fedorowicz

Lecture 18 Midterm review activities
READ (REVIEW) all photo related class readings

Part III: Documentary Film

Lecture 19 Film and discussion: Kokoyakyu (Eng, 2006)
READ: Whiting The Samurai Way of Baseball and the National Character
Debate –AND- Kelly An Anthropologist in the Bleachers: Cheering a Japanese
Baseball Team

Lecture 20 Documentary Film
READ Barbash and Taylor Cross-Cultural Filmmaking

Lecture 21 Film and discussion: The Cove (Psihoyos, 2009)
READ <http://visualanthropologyofjapan.blogspot.jp/search?q=The+Cove>

Lecture 22 Nuts and Bolts

READ Barbash and Taylor Nuts and Bolts

Lecture 23 Film and discussion: Cuba Sentimental (Tanuma, 2010)

READ

<http://visualanthropologyofjapan.blogspot.jp/search?q=cuba+sentimental>

Lecture 24 Film and discussion: The Great Happiness Space (Clennell 2006)

READ Takeyama

Lecture 25 Low Budget Films and Student Projects

Short films: Tohoku Hitchhiking (Shuff, 2000) and Performing Naturalness (Dacot, 2008). Also: Selected VAOJ Student Shorts

Lecture 26 Film and discussion: Against Coercion: Refusing To Stand For Kimigayo

(Matsubara and Sasaki, 2006)

READ VAOJ posts on Japanese flag, national anthem, patriotism

Lecture 27 Film and discussion: Peace (Soda 2010)

READ <http://visualanthropologyofjapan.blogspot.jp/2013/05/golden-week-ii.html>

Lecture 28 Film Treatment Presentations

Lecture 29 Film Treatment Presentations

Lecture 30 Course wrap-up and review activities

READ (REVIEW) all film related class readings

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

All work outside of classroom assignments, including reading assignments with their full citations, can be found on the university Black Board System and/or Visual Anthropology of Japan website.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Grading will be based on:

1. Class Participation and Activities (10%)
2. Two-Frame Photo Story Presentation (15%)
3. Film Treatment Presentation (15%)
4. Midterm Exam I (20%)
5. Midterm Exam II (20%)
6. Final Exam (20%)

Section 5

【Additional Information】

Standards of Personal and Academic Conduct

Personal Conduct: Please refrain from any personal conduct that infringes upon the rights of other students, faculty, or staff. Examples of other unacceptable behavior includes, among other things, interrupting others during class discussions, making rude and/or abusive comments, coming to class late, and leaving class early.

Electronic Devices: Please refrain from using laptop computers, cell phones, iPods, iPads, e-books, video games, tape recorders, digital cameras, video cameras, etc. in class without permission. Such usage in the form of multi-tasking rarely adds to the classroom experience at the time and is also distracting to other students.

Academic Cheating: The best advice here is don't do it! So there is no misunderstanding about the nature of cheating or our university's policies, I provide the KGU Center for International Education and Asian Studies Program official policy:

The Asian Studies Program takes very seriously any incident of academic cheating. Cheating is unfair to students who work honestly, and compromises both the learning and evaluation processes.

Academic cheating includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (using previously published work without properly acknowledging the source, including that available on the internet); submitting work done in collusion with a student or someone else in a manner not authorized by the instructor; misconduct on an examination, or any other attempt to dishonestly pass off another's work as one's own or otherwise create an unfair academic advantage.

The penalties for academic cheating may include failure on the assignment [and] failure in the course.