

2024 Fall Semester

Japanese Popular Media and Society

Section 1

Instructor	Julieta de Icaza Lizaola M.A
Office/Building	
Office Hours	By appointment

【Course Outline / Description】

The goal of this course is to study the structure and development of Japanese popular media, specifically story-telling media from pre-modern times to present-day Japan. The course will focus on how popular media have been instrumental in addressing various social issues and historical transitions. Additionally, it will analyze the dynamics of the interaction between different media, known as the media mix, to fully understand how and why messages spread widely through pop culture. Ultimately, the course aims to explore how Japan and enthusiasts of Japanese culture consume stories from pre-modern times to the present.

Throughout the course, we will discuss the role of media in society and in people's personal lives, as well as the different types of character and story consumption in the history of storytelling media in Japan. This exploration will take us through significant social and historical changes in modern Japan, highlighting the role of media in the development of historical processes and social movements.

The course will be structured around practical teamwork to explore the differences between various media and the dynamics between them. Students will form teams to create their own original stories and characters. Throughout the course, they will adapt these stories and characters to different media to gain firsthand understanding of the processes of adaptation and the evolution of media and pop culture in Japan.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

In the field of Media Studies, students will learn about the specificities of some of the most relevant media in Japanese pop culture, such as Kabuki theater, manga, anime, and film. They will also discuss the role of media in society and how mass media and the hyper-consumption of narratives have influenced modern-day Japan. Additionally, they will explore how the media mix has shaped the

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economic and artistic landscape of present-day pop culture. In addition to delving into these theoretical concepts, this course also aims to provide students with an introduction to some of the main works, tropes, and characters of Japanese pop culture narratives.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand the theoretical concepts of media mix, story-telling media and “grand narrative”.
- Understand the mediatic specificities of kabuki theater, ukyo-e, kami shibai, manga, anime and Japanese film, amongst others .
- Understand the role of media in Japanese society and how it differs from the role of media in their own country.
- Understand the dynamics between different story-telling media.
- Have a clear understanding of the convergence between society, consumption and narratives.
- Reflect on the influence of over consumption in art and narratives.
- Have a clear understanding of the relationship between media and social and historical processes.

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

BLOCK 1: PRE-MODERN TIMES

Class 1: **Course Introduction: Media and Japanese Pop Culture**

- In this class, we will go through the course assignments, assessments, and rules, such as late submission policies, in-class participation, etc.
- We will start the course talking about media and it’s function, as well as a discussion on the meaning of Japanese Pop Culture.
- **In-class reading:** “The Medium is the Message” by Marshall McLuhan

Class 2: **Origins of Japanese Narrative**

- In this class, we will explore the origins of narrative in ancient Japan, specifically in mythology and folk tales.
- **Reading Assignments:**
 - “Seeds in the heart” (excerpt) by Donald Keene

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Class 3: **The Narrative of the Heian Court**

- In this class, we will explore the origins of written narrative and poetry in the Heian Courts. We will look at the structure of the Heian Court texts and see how they have influenced present day narrative media.
- **Reading Assignments:**
- "Seeds in the heart" (excerpt) by Donald Keene
- The Tale of Genji (excerpt)

Class 4: **The Floating World**

- In this class, we will explore the world of the floating world in Edo period and the aesthetic and narrative tropes that got developed in that period.
- **Reading Assignment:** "World Within Walls" (excerpt) by Donald Keene

Class 5: **Kabuki Theater**

- In this class, we will take an in-depth look at Kabuki theater, its origin and evolution and discuss the difference in its role during the Edo period and present day Japan.
- **Reading Assignment:** "Kabuki, five classic plays" (excerpt) by James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter

BLOCK 2: MODERNITY AND WAR

Class 6: **Meiji Cartoons**

- In this class we will take an in-depth view at the arrival of western cartoons into Japan and how they started shaping manga, visual arts, and political commentary through Media.
- **Reading assignment:** "Manga, 60 years of Japanese Comics" (excerpt) by Paul Gravett

Class 7: **Propaganda, Imperialism and Entertainment for Children**

- In this class, we will take a look at the role of propaganda in the development in manga and anime in modern Japan.
- **Viewing Assignment:**
-Momotaro's Sea Eagles (available in YouTube)

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Class 8: **Post War Japan entertainment. Kamishibai and Akahon**

- In this class, we will take a look at visual narratives got developed during the dire economical and social circumstances of Post War Japan.
- **Reading assignment:** “Manga, 60 years of Japanese Comics” (excerpt) by Paul Gravett.

Class 9: **Shonen Manga**

- In this class, we will discuss the origins of shonen manga and it’s social roles.
- **Reading Assignment:**
 - “Astro Boy” by Ozamu Tezuka
 - “Budha” by Ozamu Tezuka
 - “Space Battleship Yamato” Leiji Matsumoto

Class 10: **Anime’s technical limitations and specificities**

- In this class, we will explore the rise of anime, and how some of it’s greatest limitations later became a defining part of it’s style.
- **Reading Assignment:**
 - “The Anime Machine” (excerpt) by Thomas Lamarre.

Class 11: **Gekiga**

- In this class we will learn about gekiga and alternative manga. How manga served as a counter culture and as a means of voicing social discomfort
- **Reading Assignment:**
 - “Ashita no Joe” by Asao Takamori
 - “Onwards to Our Noble Deaths” by Mizuki Shigeru

Class 12: **Guest speaker: visual protest in photography (Dr. Daniel Abbe)**

BLOCK 3: Japan’s financial recovery and new entertainment markets.

Class 13 : **Media Mix**

In this class we will talk about the concept of media mix. One of the more important elements

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to understand media and pop culture in present day Japan

- **Reading Assignment:**

- “Anime’s Media Mix” (excerpt) by Marc Steinberg

- “One Piece”

- **Viewing assignment: (choose one)**

- “One Piece” anime adaptation

- “One Piece” Live action Netflix adaptation

Class 14: **Shojo Romance**

- In this class, we will examine “girls culture” expressed through manga and how manga has been historically used as a way of negotiating the limitations of gender roles.

- **Reading Assignment:**

- “The Rose of Versailles” by Ikeda Ryoko

- “The Song of the Wind and the Trees” by Takemiya Keiko

Class 15: **Magic Girls**

In this class we will examine how magic girls have served as a reflection of the position of women in Japanese society, and the movements between their attempts at empowerment and their look at tradition

- **Reading Viewing Assignment:**

- “Magical Angel Creamy Mami” by Emi Mitsuki

- “Sailor Moon”by Naoko Takeuchi

- “Madoka Magica” by the Magica Quartet

Class 16: **Guest Speaker: Surrealism in pop culture (Prof. David Yamato)**

Class 17: **Otaku Pop Culture**

- In this class, we will take look into the rise and dynamics of Otaku Culture.

- **Reading Assignment:**

- “Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals” (excerpt) by Azuma Hiroki

BLOCK 4: POST-MODERN TIMES

Class 18: **Game Narratives**

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- In this class, we will discuss the role of video games in Otaku culture and how game narratives have influenced the story-telling style of other pop culture media.
- **Reading Assignment:**
-“Playing Anime: A Comparative Media-Theoretical Approach to Anime as a Specific Medium” (Excerpt) by Selen Çalik Bedir

Class 19: Fan Practices

In this class we will explore the involvement and the role of fans and fan practices in Japanese Pop Culture, including Cosplay, fan fictions, fan art, comic markets, etc.

Reading Assignment:

- “Cosplay Everywhere: Costume Diplomacy at the World. Cosplay Summit”
by Emerald L. King

Class 20: Post Modern Characters

In this class we will discuss how characters have gone from the story into our everyday lives and into creating parasocial relationships with viewers.

Reading Assignment: “Characters in Japanese Communication and Language: An Overview” by Toshiyuki Sadanobu

Class 21: Anime exports

In this class we will look into the anime boom outside of Japan and the globalization of otaku culture as a global phenomenon.

- **Reading Assignment: (choose one)**
-“Anime’s Identity” (excerpt) by Stevie Suan

Class 22: Sci-fi 1 . Robots

In this class we will look at one of the main genres from Japanese pop culture, with a special emphasis in the relationship between human bodies and technology.

Viewing assignment (Choose one)

- Neon Genesis Evangelion
- Mobile Suit Gundam
- Magnetic Rose

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Class 23: **Sci-fi 2 . Cities**

In this class we will look at one of the main genres from Japanese pop culture, with a special emphasis in the hyper development of cities and dystopia.

- **Reading/ Viewing Assignment (choose one):**

- Akira
- Ghost in the Shell
- Cannon Fodder

Class 24: **J-Horror**

- In this class we will look at one of the main genres from Japanese pop culture and how it reflected different anxieties of the time.
- **Viewing (choose one)**
 - “Ringu”
 - “Ju-On”
 - “Another”
 - “The Drifting classroom”

Class 25: **Kawaii**

look at one of the main stylistic characteristics from Japanese pop culture

- **Viewing Assignment: (Choose one)**
 - My neighbor Totoro
 - Card Captor Sakura
 - Yuru Camp

Class 26: Takarazuka and pop culture stage adaptations.

In this class we will talk about Takarazuka theater, the influence of Kabuki theater, it's relevance in the LGBTQ community and the media mix adaptations to the stage.

Reading Assignment:

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-“The Women’s Theater of Takarazuka” by Lorie Brau

Class 27: **Cool Japan**

In this class we will discuss the political, social, and cultural results of the rise in popularity of Japanese Pop Culture, as well as the dynamics of soft power.

Viewing Assignment: (choose one)

- Demon Slayer Mugen Train.
- Pokemon (any three chapters of the anime)

Class 28: **The Grand Narrative**

In the last class of the course we will discuss how all this different media create a cohesive grand narrative and have created a mediatic narrative experience that goes beyond one single mediatic text.

Reading assignment:

-“World Variation. The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative” by Otsuka Eiji.

Class 29: **Final Presentations**

Class 30: **Final Presentations**

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

All readings will be available for students to download from a Blackboard class folder, where specific excerpts from each book that are required for reading will be marked.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Class participation 20%

Creative assignment 1: pre-modern times (in teams) 15%

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Creative assignment 2: modernity (in teams) 15%

Creative assignment 3: post-war times (in teams) 15%

Creative assignment 4: post-modern times (in teams) 15%

Final Presentation (in teams) 20%

The assessments in this class are designed for the following purposes:

Firstly, to encourage active participation in class workshops and evaluate students' abilities to engage in discussions. A class participation grade will be awarded based on their involvement and contributions. Not participating in the workshops, failure to complete the required readings or engaging in distractions (such as texting, sleeping, watching videos, etc.) will result in a lower participation grade.

Additionally, to reinforce the concepts learned in class, students will have a hands-on experience creating their own storytelling media in teams during class workshops. The purpose of this assignment is to gain a firsthand understanding of the specificities of each medium and the processes of adaptation and evolution of each narrative medium.

This assignment will not be graded based on artistic merit but rather on how well students justify their creative decisions to align with the content of the course.

Lastly, to enhance their academic skills and apply the concepts from the class to develop their own original ideas through research. Students will be required to deliver a final presentation (in teams) on one of the following questions.

- How do people consume stories in Japanese culture?
- How does the media mix affect story telling?
- How does the media mix affect consuming stories?
- How does the story telling and consumption in the media mix affect the social roles of story telling?
- What are the social roles of story telling?
- What are the personal roles of story telling?
- What are the dynamics of the media mix?
- Is hyper consumerism beneficial or detrimental for story telling?

Students are also allowed to come up with their own questions, but in this case the question must be approved by the professor.

Section 5

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【Additional Information】

Classroom policies:

- Students may arrive up to 10 minutes late.
- Students will be marked as late if they arrive 11 minutes or more after the scheduled start.
- Students will be marked as absent if they arrive 30 minutes late.
- Late submissions will be accepted up until 24 hours later, with a penalty of 10% of the grade. (Exceptions can be granted.)
- During class discussions, all opinions are accepted and encouraged, as long as they are expressed with respect and empathy.