

Semester: Spring 2023

Monsters, Ghosts and the Making of Modern Japan

Instructor/Title	Mark Hollstein, Ph.D./Associate Professor
Office/Building	3303/Building 3

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.

Section 2

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. 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.

Section 3

Class Schedule

Lecture 1: *Course Introduction: Why Study Monsters?*

Lecture 2: *Mononoke, Kami and Yōkai in Premodern Japan*

Reading Assignment: “Introducing to Yōkai” from *The Yōkai Book*, by Michael Dylan Foster.

- Lecture 3: ***Edo Period Neo Confucianism and The Hundred Demon Night Parade***
Reading Assignment: “Natural History of the Weird” from *Pandemonium and Parade* by Michael Dylan Foster.
- Lecture 4: ***Yōkai in Edo Period Art and Popular Media***
Reading Assignment: “One Hundred Demons and One Hundred Supernatural Tales” by Midori Deguchi from *Japanese Ghosts and Demons*.
- Lecture 5: ***Yōkai and Edo Period Politics***
Reading Assignment: “Kuniyoshi’s Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider: Demons and Protest in Late Tokugawa Japan” by Melinda Takeuchi.
- Lecture 6: ***“Yotsuya Kaidan” and the Politics of Vengeful Female Ghosts***
Reading Assignment: “Vengeful Spirits,” from *Archetypes in Japanese Film*, by Gregory Barrett.
- Lecture 7: ***Inoue Enryō: Ridding Meiji of Monsters***
Reading Assignment: “Science of the Weird,” from *Pandemonium and Parade* by Michael Dylan Foster.
- Lecture 8: ***Yanagita Kunio: Rethinking the Role of Monsters in Modernity***
Reading Assignment: *The Legends of Tono*, by Yanagita Kunio.
- Lecture 9: ***Lafcadio Hearn: Introducing Yōkai to the West***
Reading Assignment: “Of Ghosts and Goblins,” by Lafcadio Hearn from *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*.
- Lecture 10: ***“Hoichi the Earless” and other Tales Preserved by Hearn***
Reading Assignment: “Reconciliation” by Lafcadio Hearn, from *Shadowings* and “The Story of Mimi-nashi Hoichi” and “Yuki Onna,” by Lafcadio Hearn from *Kwaidan*.
- Lecture 11: ***Edogawa Rampo: Japan’s Edgar Allan Poe***
Reading Assignment: “The Human Chair” and “The Caterpillar” From *Japanese Tales of Myster and Imagination*, by Edogawa Rampo.
- Lecture 12: ***Ero-Guro-Nansensu in Art and Popular Culture Today***
Reading Assignment: Butoh: Twenty Years Ago We Were Crazy, Dirty and Mad,” *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 30, No. 2.
- Lecture 13: **Quiz 1 and Discussion**
- Lecture 14: **Student Monster Presentations**
- Lecture 15: ***Monsters in WWII Propaganda***
Reading Assignment: “Momotaro and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism,” by Klaus Antoni.
- Lecture 16: ***Dealing with Defeat by Defeating Godzilla***
Reading Assignment: “The Birth of Gojira,” from *Godzilla on My Mind*, by William Tsutsui.
- Lecture 17: Reading Assignment: “The Godzilla Franchise” from *Godzilla on My Mind*, by William Tsutsui.

- Lecture 18: ***Rediscovering Yōkai Through Mizuki Shigeru's "GeGeGe no Kitaro"***
Reading Assignment: "Media of the Weird," from *Pandemonium and Parade* by Michael Dylan Foster.
- Lecture 19: **Reading Assignment:** "Haunted Travelogue: Hometowns, Ghost Towns and Memories of War," by Michael D. Foster.
- Lecture 20: ***"The Suicide Charge that Kitaro Saw: Mizuki Shigeru's War"***
- Lecture 21: Reading Assignment: "Monstrous Loss: The Dismemberment and Reanimation of the National Body in Japanese War and Horror Manga," by Mark Hollstein.
- Lecture 22: ***Horror Manga and the Realities of Postwar Japan***
Reading Assignment: "Unusual Fetus: My Baby" from *Lullabies from Hell* by Hino Hideshi and *The Drifting Classroom, Chapters 1 & 3* by Umezu Kazuo.
- Lecture 23: **Quiz 2 and Discussion**
- Lecture 24: ***"Uzumaki"***
Reading Assignment: "The Spiral Obsession," in *Uzumaki*, by Junji Ito.
- Lecture 25: ***The Obsessions of Ito Junji***
Reading Assignment: "Spiraling into Apocalypse" by Jay McRoy.
- Lecture 26: ***"The Ringu"***
Reading Assignment: "Ghosts of the Present, Specters of the Past: *Kaidan* and the Haunted Family in the Cinema of Nakata Hideo and Shimizu Takashi" from *Nightmare Japan: Japanese Contemporary Horror Cinema*, by Jay McRoy.
- Lecture 27: ***Suzuki Koji and Dangerous Children in the Early 2000s***
Reading Assignment: "Floating Water" in *Dark Water* by Suzuki Koji.
- Lecture 28: ***Artist Murakami Takashi's "Jellyfish Eyes"***
- Lecture 29: ***Murakami Takashi and the Ghosts of 3/11***
Reading Assignment: "Skulls and Flowers" by David Pilling.
- Lecture 30: ***Pokémon: Fakelore, Folklorism and Finance***
Reading Assignment: "Pokémon: Getting Monsters and Communicating Capitalism" from *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, by Anne Allison.

Section 4

Reading Materials:

There is a reading assignment for each class period. You should have completed the reading before the beginning of class. All reading assignments will be available in the "Assignments" section of Blackboard from which they can be downloaded and printed or read online.

Grading:

Quiz 1: 20 percent

Quiz 2: 20 percent

Final Exam: 20 percent

Participation: 10 percent

Class Presentation: 15 percent

Presentation Essay: 15 Percent

Section 5

Quizzes:

Two quizzes and a final exam will be given over the course of the semester; they will be comprised of about 25 true-or-false and multiple-choice questions. You will have about thirty minutes to answer, after which we will correct and discuss the questions in class.

Participation:

Attendance is mandatory for each class period. If you must be absent, please talk to me before the class you will miss to see if your absence can be excused. Your score in this category depends upon BOTH regular attendance and regular participation.

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.