

Contemporary Japanese Culture: From Postwar to Postmodern

EAL / HMN 270
Spring 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays
2:00–3:15 PM
Carswell 014

Instructor: Nicholas Albertson
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Office hours: Mondays 1–3 PM,
and by appointment

Course Description:

Japan's GDP has been surpassed by China's, and its economic golden years may be decades in the past, but contemporary Japanese culture is as unstoppable as ever in its march to take over the world with its mix of *manga*, *anime*, Hello Kitty, and Murakami Haruki. From postwar industrial boom to post-bubble, postmodern fantasy, this course will explore some of the diverse voices and art forms, including fiction, poetry, graphic novels, films, advertising, and other art forms, in their cultural and historical contexts. Specifically, we will focus on the following themes: "Japan's Continuing Postwar," "Voices from the Margins," "Gender," and "Environmental Disasters." In the process, we will engage with critical concepts about cultural and media studies.

Course Format:

Class meets twice a week in a seminar format. Active student participation is crucial to the success of the course, and attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. Three 5-page papers will be due during the semester. A mid-term 10-minute presentation will form the basis of the second of these papers. A final 15-minute presentation will then form the basis of your final research paper, due during exam week. These presentations and the papers based on them will allow you to explore topics and themes of particular interest to you in contemporary Japanese culture.

Course Texts:

The following texts have been ordered by the bookstore. Additional copies are on reserve at the library. All other course readings are available through the ZSR website or on Sakai. Films (to be watched on your own) are on reserve at the library.

NAKAGAMI, Kenji. *The Cape, and Other Stories from the Japanese Ghetto*. Translated by Eve Zimmerman. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1999 (ISBN: 978-1880656396) or 2008 (978-1933330433).

YOSHIMOTO, Banana. *Kitchen*. Translated by Megan Backus. NY: Grove Press, 2006 (ISBN: 978-0802142443), or Washington Square Press, 1988 (978-0671880187).

Grading:

Attendance and participation: 15%

Commented [A1]: I added a subtitle.

Commented [A2]: I added this clause to emphasize the similarities both between the real and the fantastic and between unsustainable industrial development and theoretically unlimited imaginary worlds in science fiction, fantasy, and other genres.

Commented [A3]: This is the new section of the course, replacing "Kitsch, Kitty-chan, and Kids."

Three essays:	45
Mid-term presentation:	10
Final presentation:	15
Final essay:	15

Policies:

Specifications for Submitting Written Work: You may submit your essays either in hard copy or by e-mail as Word or PDF files. Please use a double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins all around, numbered pages, and your name and a title. Be sure to cite your sources and proofread your work carefully.

Deadlines: Essays are due at the beginning of class on their respective due dates. Late essays will lose one-third of a letter grade for each day past the deadline. Extensions may be granted under exceptional circumstances, but not within twenty-four hours of the deadline.

Academic Honesty: All students are expected to follow Wake Forest’s academic honor code. If you have questions about academic honesty, collaboration, proper citation of sources, etc., please feel free to ask me. See also <http://college.wfu.edu/college-judicial-system>.

Help with Writing Papers: I am always happy to discuss drafts, outlines, or paper ideas with you. In addition, the Writing Center has helpful peer tutors and online resources: <http://college.wfu.edu/writingcenter>.

Equal Access: If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (336-758-5929) within the first two weeks of the semester. See also <http://lac.wfu.edu/disability-services>.

Use of Electronic Devices: Laptops, tablet computers, mobile phones, and electronic recording devices are not allowed. For each infraction, students will have to memorize and recite a poem or passage of the instructor’s choice.

Calendar:

Week 1 Introduction: Defining Contemporary Japanese Culture

- Jan. 10 Introduction to the course
- Jan. 12 Raymond WILLIAMS, “Culture,” from *Keywords*
KAWABATA Yasunari, “Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself”
ŌE Kenzaburō, “Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself”
Douglas MCGRAY, “Japan’s Gross National Cool”

Week 2 Part I: Japan’s Continuing Postwar

- Jan. 17 NAKAZAWA Keiji, *Barefoot Gen* (selections)
Craig NORRIS, “Manga, Anime, and Visual Art Culture”
- Jan. 19 TEZUKA Osamu, “The Birth of Astro Boy,” “Ambassador Atom”
Roman ROSENBAUM, “Reading Shōwa History Through Manga”
Theodor W. ADORNO and Max HORKHEIMER, “The Culture Industry:
Enlightenment as Mass Deception”

Week 3

- Jan. 24 HIGASHI Mineo, "Child of Okinawa"
Hideki YOSHIKAWA, "An Appeal from Okinawa to the U.S. Congress"
- Jan. 26 Michael BOURDAGHS, "Mapping Misora Hibari," "Coda," from *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon*

Week 4

- Jan. 31 *Tokyo Olympiad* (FILM)
- Feb. 2 **PAPER 1 DUE**
Poetry Day 1: SAITŌ Mokichi, MIYOSHI Tatsuji, TAKAMURA Kōtarō

Week 5 Part II: Voices from the Margins

- Feb. 7 Roland BARTHES, "The Death of the Author"
Michael WEINER, "The Representation of Absence and the Absence of Representation: Korean Victims of the Atomic Bomb"
KIM Tal-su, "In the Shadow of Mount Fuji"
- Feb. 9 Melissa WENDER, "Introduction," from *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Koreans in Japan*
YŪ Miri, "Full House"

Week 6

- Feb. 14 NAKAGAMI Kenji, "The Cape," from *The Cape, and Other Stories...*
Hideo AOKI, "Buraku Culture"
- Feb. 16 NAKAGAMI, "House on Fire," from *The Cape, and Other Stories...*

Week 7

- Feb. 21 *Linda Linda Linda* (FILM)
- Feb. 23 **MID-TERM PRESENTATIONS**

Week 8

- Feb. 28 **MID-TERM PRESENTATIONS**
- Mar. 2 **PAPER 2 DUE**
Poetry Day 2: CHEON Mihye, PARK Kyong-Mi

Week 9 Part III: Gender

- Mar. 7 Tessa MORRIS-SUZUKI, "Gender," from *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*
John BERGER, *Ways of Seeing* (selections)

Laura MULVEY, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

Mar. 9 *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (FILM)

[SPRING VACATION]

Week 10

Mar. 21 YOSHIMOTO Banana, “Kitchen,” from *Kitchen*

Mar. 23 MISHIMA Yukio, “Onnagata”

Week 11

Mar. 28 IKEDA Riyoko, *The Rose of Versailles* (selections)

Mar. 30 **PAPER 3 DUE**

Poetry Day 3: ITÔ Hiroimi, TAKAHASHI Mitsuo

Week 12 **Part IV: Environmental Disasters**

Apr. 4 Tessa MORRIS-SUZUKI, “Nature,” from *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*
UMESAO Tadao, “An Ecological View of History: Japanese Civilization in the World Context”

Apr. 6 Matt PRICE, “Economics, Ecology, and the Value of Nature”
Gavan MCCORMACK, “The Construction State: The Pathology of the *Doken Kokka*”

Week 13

Apr. 11 Jeff KINGSTON, “Japan’s Nuclear Village”
Peter DUUS, “Dealing With Disaster”
Asato IKEDA, “Ikeda Manabu, the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, and Disaster/Nuclear Art in Japan”

Apr. 13 *Godzilla* (FILM)
Susan SONTAG, “The Imagination of Disaster”

Week 14

Apr. 18 *Akira* (FILM)
“What Do You Wish We Had in Japan Today?” from *Monkey Business* (2012)

Apr. 20 **FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

Week 15

Apr. 25 **FINAL PRESENTATIONS**
Class Wrap-up

Commented [A4]: This section is new. Japan’s modern history of environmental disasters and their human toll has many entries to choose from, so I narrowed down the topics to those that seemed most connected to sustainability. Week 12 looks at the history of environmental thought and economic development; week 13 deals with nuclear power and nuclear disaster; and week 14 looks to the future and how we must live with future environmental disasters.

Commented [A5]: The readings for this day introduce students to a conceptual history of nature and ecology in Japan. Morris-Suzuki’s chapter gives an overview that focuses on the last two hundred years or so. Umesao’s influential essay is problematic but useful for opening up discussion on the ecological contexts of cultural values.

Commented [A6]: These readings go from Locke’s labor theory of value to the “pathological” economic incentives that have led the postwar Japanese government and businesses to pave the country and fill in its harbors with artificial islands.

Commented [A7]: These readings focus on Japan’s nuclear power policy and its consequences—material, emotional, and artistic. The initial post-3/11 publications have sometimes been opportunistic and only tangentially relevant, but more in-depth, thoughtful work has been done/translated as the years go by, so I may have access to many more good resources by the time spring 2017 rolls around.

Commented [A8]: No explanation necessary.

Commented [A9]: Part of dealing with disaster and imagining a sustainable world is the imagination of future scenarios. *Akira*, a classic of Japanese animation, confronts a dystopian future and the dangers of concentrated political, military, religious, and technological power. The second item is an oddball publication that surveyed a number of artists, scientists, and others in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

Exam Week

FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 4 at 5 PM