

THE BUSINESS OF JAPANESE POP CULTURE

Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies
Fall 2017

Tuesday, 2:55 to 6:10

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Japanese pop culture is not only popular the world over and a source of “soft power” – it’s also big business. This course covers the business side of Japanese pop culture, including video games, pop music, manga & anime, *kawaii* (“cute”), character goods, and the Japanese government’s Cool Japan Initiative. We will explore the degree of and reasons for J pop’s business success, both in Japan and overseas, as well as the strategies used and challenges faced by companies and individuals creating and competing in these industries.

Topics and learning goals include:

- What ‘is’ Japanese pop culture? What makes it special and different from that of other countries? What accounts for its commercial success, at home and abroad?
- How do these industries work? Who are the players? What are the business models and strategies used? What are the keys to success?
- Pop culture business at the national level: Is Japan underperforming?
- Some basic business knowledge in the areas of strategy, people management, product development, international expansion, and licensing

The main class activity for this course is discussion of assigned readings. There will also be two field trips, a major group project, and a final exam.

Note: Students do not need to have studied business to take this course. Any necessary business knowledge will be presented by the instructor during the course.

STUDENT GROUP PROJECTS: WRITE A TEACHING CASE

1. Choose a player (an artist or company) in a Japanese popular culture industry, and identify some business issue or challenge that the player faces, or faced in the past.
2. Research the player, the business environment (e.g., the industry), and the issue.
3. Write a draft of a teaching case. Follow “Mini-guide for Writing a Teaching Case” as a guide (below).
4. I will ask you to report regularly on how your case research is going. On December 5, students will “teach” their case to the class.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

Class Rules

- (1) This is primarily a discussion course. Therefore, it is necessary for students to always read the assigned readings before coming to class. If you come to class without having read the assigned reading, you will be marked as 'absent' for that day.
- (2) No cell phone, tablet, or PC use is allowed in class. If you have these devices, please turn them off before class starts. (The only exception is designated periods when students are working on their group project; at these times it is OK to use your devices to research your project topic.)

If you are not willing to follow these rules, you should not take this course.

Grading

As long as you do the homework and assignments, participate actively in class, and do your best on the group project, you will do fine. Grading breakdown:

1. Attendance and Participation: 30%
 - Attendance is required at all scheduled class meetings and field trips. Unexcused absences will lower your attendance grade.
 - Participation means coming to class having read and being prepared to discuss the assigned readings, and participating actively in and contributing value to class discussion.
2. Assignments: 20%
 - For a few classes, there will homework assignments in addition to the assigned readings.
3. Group Project: 30%
 - Student teams (2-3 students each) will research, write, and teach to the class a "teaching case" on a player (artist or company) in a Japanese popular culture industry. See above for a general description, and below for details on how to write a teaching case
4. Final exam: 20%

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism—the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrative material, or statements of someone else, without full and proper acknowledgement, and presenting them as one's own—is a serious offense. It is your responsibility to become familiar with the details of how plagiarism is to be avoided, and the proper forms for quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing, which are presented in books such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Please see the instructor if you have any questions.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities.

If you are a student with a disability and have a DS-certified 'Accommodation Letter' please see the KCJS resident director to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you have a disability that requires accommodation, you can contact your home school's Disability Services or Columbia's Disability Services at disability@columbia.edu. The Office of Global Programs (OGP) can also assist you to connect with Columbia's Disability Services.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. Sept 5: Introduction to the course and Japanese pop culture
 - J pop quiz, YouTube videos, discuss characteristics of Japanese pop culture
 - *Homework for next class:*
 - ① “Consume” some product of Japanese pop culture: for example a manga, anime, song, TV show, movie, video game, fashion, event, or TV commercial – it must be new to you.
 - a) What do you notice about it that is different from other countries’ pop culture?
 - b) What characteristics of it make it attractive, popular, or commercially successful?
 - c) Evaluate the potential and the limitations to its successful export.
 - ② Read and prepare to discuss the case “The Japanese Anime Industry: Studio Trigger Finds Its Mark”
 - ③ Read and prepare to discuss the case “License to Overkill”

2. Sept 12: The anime industry; Licensing
 - Debrief and discuss the “Consume some product of Japanese pop culture” product” assignment
 - Discuss “Studio Trigger” and “License to Overkill” cases
 - *Homework for next class:*
 - ① Read and prepare to discuss “Revisioning Japanese Religiosity: Osamu Tezuka’s *Hi no Tori* (The Phoenix)” and excerpt from “Phoenix”
 - ② Read and prepare to discuss excerpt from “Barefoot Gen”
 - ③ Decide group project teams and topics.

3. Sept 19: Manga and Tezuka Osamu
 - Lecture on manga, Tezuka Osamu
 - Discuss assigned readings

4. Sept 26: Field trip to International Manga Museum
 - *Homework for next class:* Read and prepare to discuss:
 - ① “Pop Idols and the Asian Identity”
 - ② “Japanese Pop Music and Idols”
 - ③ “Johnny & Associates: Japanese Pop Idol Producer Looks Overseas”
 - ④ “AKB48: The Making of a Pop Idol Juggernaut”

5. Oct 3: Japanese pop music and idols

- Discuss the 4 assigned readings
 - *Homework for next class:* Read and prepare to discuss the case “Toei Kyoto Studio Park: Tapping into Kyoto's Tourism Boom”
6. Oct 10: Tourism in Kyoto
- Discuss Kyoto tourism and “Toei Kyoto Studio Park” case
7. Oct 17: Field trip to Toei Kyoto Studio Park ("Eiga Mura")
- *Homework for next class:*
 - ① Write up and hand in your answers to these questions: What are one or two suggestions you have for attracting more non-Japanese visitors to Eiga Mura? What would the costs be of implementing your suggestion(s)?
 - ② Read and prepare to discuss the case “Square Enix: Keeping the Fantasy Alive”
8. Oct 24: Video games; Student projects
- Debrief Eiga Mura visit
 - Discuss “Square Enix” case
 - Work on projects
 - *Homework for next class:* Read and prepare to discuss:
 - ① “Doraemon Goes Abroad”
 - ② “‘Kawaii’: Hello Kitty and Japanese Cute”
9. Oct 31: Japanese pop culture overseas; *kawaii*, Hello Kitty, and character merchandise;
- Discuss assigned readings
 - *Homework for next class:* Read and prepare to discuss “Men Under Pressure: Representations of the ‘Salaryman’ and his Organization in Japanese Manga”
10. Nov 14: The Japanese economy, Japanese-style management, and business manga
- Lecture on Japanese economy, Japanese-style management
 - Discuss “Men under Pressure”
 - *Homework for next class:* Read and prepare to discuss the case "Cool Japan: Industrial Policy for Cultural Industries"
11. Nov 21: “Soft power” and the Cool Japan Initiative (I)

- Discuss soft power and the Cool Japan Initiative
 - *Homework for next class:* Pitch a project to the Cool Japan Fund Investment Committee:
 - In pairs, come up with a project idea to pitch to the Cool Japan Fund Investment Committee.
 - Put the essentials on 2-3 Powerpoint slides. "Essentials" means: What is the project? How will it help achieve the goals of the Cool Japan Initiative?
 - Present the project idea to the rest of the class, who act as members of the Cool Japan Fund Investment Committee.
 - Each committee member (student) has \$500,000 to invest; this money can be invested in one project or spread among multiple projects
12. Nov 28: Cool Japan Initiative (II) – Project proposal pitches to the Cool Japan Fund Investment Committee
- Project pitches & results
 - Work on project presentations
13. Dec 5: Student project presentations – Teach your case to the class
14. Dec 12: Final Exam

READING LIST AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Listed below are the assigned readings and the discussion questions for each reading.

Sept 12 – “The Japanese Anime Industry: Studio Trigger Finds Its Mark”

- What are the keys to Studio Trigger’s success up to now? What has allowed this studio to grow from zero in 2011, when it was founded, to being one of the anime industry’s most-watched “rising stars” in 2017?
- For Trigger, what is the optimal balance of original anime vs. anime based on manga or other previously published works?
- What strategies should CEO Ōtsuka follow to secure Trigger’s place as a profitable player in Japan’s competitive anime industry and a rewarding place to work? Conduct a SWOT analysis and use it to determine the most effective overall strategy and make specific recommendations.

Sept 12 – "License to Overkill"

- What’s the best strategy for Baby Ruby?

Sept 19 – “Revisioning Japanese Religiosity: Osamu Tezuka’s *Hi no Tori* (The Phoenix)” and “Phoenix”

- What are the main themes of *Hi no Tori*?
- What did you learn from these readings about manga and Osamu Tezuka?

Sept 19 – "Barefoot Gen"

- What are your thoughts or comments about this manga, and Hiroshima?

Oct 3 – "Pop Idols and the Asian Identity" and "Japanese Pop Music and Idols"

- What makes the Japanese music market and the Japanese idol industry unique, or different from other markets?
- What do Exhibits 2, 3, and 11 show about trends in the global and Japanese music markets? What are the implications of these trends for Japan's record companies and talent agencies?
- What do these readings tell you about Japan and Japanese culture? How do they differ from your home country and culture?

Oct 3 – "Johnnys & Associates: Japanese Pop Idol Producer Looks Overseas"

- What are the keys to the success of Johnny & Associates and its artists in Japan?
- Evaluate the international appeal and market potential of Johnny's artists. Is the appeal of Johnny's-produced artists and their music universal, or is it culture-specific? Should Johnny's expand internationally? Is so, in what form and to which markets?
- What is the best scenario for the future of Johnny's in terms of company leadership? How can that scenario be brought about?

Oct 3 – "AKB48: The Making of a Pop Idol Juggernaut"

- What are the keys to AKB48's success?
- Is AKB48's decline inevitable? How can Akimoto keep AKB48 (and its sister groups) going strong as long as possible?
- Evaluate AKB's international appeal and market potential. Is the appeal universal or culture-specific? Should Akimoto further expand the 48 franchise internationally? Is so, in what form and to which markets?

Oct 10 – "Toei Kyoto Studio Park: Tapping into Kyoto's Tourism Boom" case

- Spend a few minutes exploring the Eiga Mura website (<http://www.toei-eigamura.com/en/>). What are your impressions of the park? Does the website make you want to visit the park?
- Can a city be too successful in attracting tourists? The number of visitors to Kyoto has jumped sharply in the last 2 or 3 years. What are the potential risks of this, and how can they be dealt with?

Oct 24 – "Square Enix: Keeping the Fantasy Alive"

- Why was Square Enix able to establish itself as "one of the titans of the global video game industry?" What were the keys to the company's success up until 2005? What are the fundamental reasons that the company has struggled financially in the years since 2005?
- What strategies should new CEO Matsuda pursue to reestablish Square Enix as a strong and profitable player in the video game industry? Conduct a SWOT analysis and use it to determine the most effective overall strategy and make specific recommendations.
- Should Square Enix change its organizational approach to game development (for example, by removing hierarchy or using teams with a mix of Japanese and foreigners)? If so, how?

Oct 31 – "Doraemon Goes Abroad"

- How is Doraemon different from children's comics or anime in other countries?
- Doraemon is popular in other Asian countries but less known and popular in Western countries. Does this mean that Japanese and Asian kids are different from Western kids?

Oct 31 – "'Kawaii': Hello Kitty and Japanese Cute"

- Do you think the appeal of *kawaii* is universal, or specific to Japan?
- Do you think *kawaii*'s popularity is a healthy phenomenon? Unhealthy? Explain.
- How did Sanrio change its Hello Kitty business model, and why has the new one produced better results than the old one?
- In view of Exhibits 1 and 2, and other information in the case, do you think Sanrio should make any changes in its Kitty-related strategy? Explain.

Nov 14 – "Men Under Pressure: Representations of the 'Salaryman' and his Organization in Japanese Manga"

- Reading this, what impression do you get of Japanese business and Japanese businesspeople? How do they differ from business and businesspeople in your home country?

Nov 21 – "Cool Japan: Industrial Policy for Cultural Industries"

- Does the popularity of Japanese pop culture give Japan any kind of "power?" If it does, give an example.
- Evaluate the Cool Japan Initiative, including the Cool Japan Fund. Will it achieve its goals? Is this a good use of taxpayer money?
- Looking at Exhibit 1, what is your impression of the projects invested in?

MINI-GUIDE FOR WRITING A TEACHING CASE

What is a teaching case?

A teaching case presents a “real-life” problem or challenge – one that does not have an obvious solution. It puts readers in the position of the decision-maker who must deal with the problem or challenge. It provides information about the organization, the decision-maker, and the situation, and requires students to use this information plus their own knowledge and abilities to come up with the best way to deal with the problem or challenge. A good case provides useful information, stimulates discussion, and results in learning and understanding.

Typical Steps in the Case-writing Process

1. Decide the industry, company, and topic or theme of the case. For a business case, the topic or theme should take the form of some business issue or challenge that a company or a manager faces.
2. Think about the teaching objectives: What will students learn by doing this case? One way to do this is to complete the sentence, “After studying and discussing this case, students will understand... and be able to...”
3. Research: get as much relevant information as you can about the industry, the company, and the issue and situation. You can use either primary or secondary sources. Having contacts in the company can make a case more authentic and interesting, but it is not necessary.
4. Decide who the protagonist (decision-maker) is: his/her name, position in the organization, and responsibilities. It is better to have a real protagonist than a fictitious one.
5. Write the case. This is an iterative process: Write an outline, write the first draft, do more research, revise and edit the outline and the draft, and so on...

Typical Structure of a Case

- A. Introduction. This is the first 2 or 3 paragraphs of the case. It introduces the company and the protagonist, the situation and the time frame, and the key issues or questions the protagonist must deal with. A good introduction pulls the reader into the case and makes him/her want to read more.

Here is an example:

In the autumn of 2015, Johnny Kitagawa wandered into Johnny’s Family Club in the Shibuya Ward of Tokyo. The mainly female customers inside didn’t give him a second glance, save for possibly wondering what a little old man was doing inside a pop idol shop. Although Kitagawa was a music legend in Japan and head of the country’s largest talent agency, Johnny & Associates—“Johnny’s” for short—not many people knew his face and he liked it that way. He could observe and listen to fans of Johnny’s groups up close as they browsed the memorabilia inside the store. Kitagawa had no desire to be famous himself. He simply wanted to produce male idol groups and control his company’s performers and business activities from behind the scenes.

As he wandered around the shop, Kitagawa paid more attention to the demographics of the shop's customers. What surprised him most was the number of foreigners. Had his company and its entertainment acts really become that popular overseas? Some of his performers had mentioned the growing number of foreign fans attending concerts and events, but it still surprised him to see so many non-Japanese in the shop. "Well," he thought, "we've recently started making our website and performers' blogs available in English, Chinese, and Korean, as well as Japanese. Maybe that's behind the increase in international fans." Thinking about Japan's shrinking music market, he wondered if his company should reach out more to international fans and expand more aggressively into foreign markets. He walked out of the shop, deep in thought about the possibilities and challenges of globalization.

- B. Body of the case. This provides all the information needed to discuss the case and come up with answers to the questions facing the protagonist. It typically includes information about the industry, the business environment (and how it is changing), the company or organization, and the problem or challenge the protagonist has to deal with.
- C. Conclusion. The last section returns to and restates the question(s) facing the protagonist, and may also raise new questions.
- D. Exhibits: various information in non-prose form.

Other

- Citing information sources: All sources used in writing the case must be shown using footnotes or endnotes. For how to do this, including format, use any BlueSky Publishing case as a model.
- Teaching cases are usually written using the past tense.
- Cases usually come with a Teaching Note for instructors, which includes suggestions for teaching the case, discussion questions, analysis and answers to the questions, and "what happened." For this class you don't need to write a Teaching Note. But you should write 2 or 3 discussion questions (which you will give to the class), plus your own answers to the discussion questions.
- Characteristics of a good case:
 - It's interesting and there is lots to learn from it.
 - Contains challenging real-world issues and problems that there are not obvious answers to.
 - It's well-organized and the writing is clear and precise.
 - Length: usually around 8-12 pages (not counting exhibits)
 - All information is accurate, and sources are cited in endnotes.
 - Clean, consistent format.