

**Contemporary Japanese Film**  
KCJS Fall 2018  
Professor Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto

Tuesdays 2:55 – 6:10 pm  
Office Hours: After class and by appointment  
Email: [jess@world.ryukoku.ac.jp](mailto:jess@world.ryukoku.ac.jp)

**Course description and objectives**

Contemporary Japanese cinema is notable for the numerous genres and sub-genres that have emerged, coexisted, and influenced one another over the past six decades. Each of these cinematic forms reflects, in some measure, the historical context in which it emerged, while collectively they reveal the appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of various cultural elements and cross-cultural influences.

Therefore, while the works we will examine are contemporary, we will do so within a historical framework, starting with a late 1960s adaptation of a 1920s novel before turning to horror, comedy and documentary categories, original feature live action films, and animation, including adaptations based on literature and manga. We will discuss how elements as diverse as food culture, pop and rock music, fashion, and plastic surgery are incorporated into some of these films, and how issues of religion, gender, race, class, and the environment are treated.

**Format**

The course consists of assigned readings (please read these before coming to class), lectures, film screenings, discussion, and at least one field trip to a site relevant to class content. By the end of the course, students will pick a topic related to contemporary Japanese film (if you have questions about the suitability of your topic, discuss it with the instructor) and present a research paper, to be handed in for their final grade.

**Course Requirements**

Attendance (10%)

Participation in class discussion (20%)

Four short response papers (between 600 and 700 words], based on the week's screening or field trip) ( $5\% \times 4 = 20\%$ )

Presentation in class (10 to 15 minutes, Powerpoint presentation based on final research paper) (20%)

Research Paper (finalized version should take into consideration peer comments and questions during earlier presentation; between 3500 and 4500 words) (30%): due last class

**Accessibility Issues**

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. The Office of Global Programs (OGP) can also assist you to connect with Columbia University's Disability Services.

## **Class Content**

### **Part 1: Contemporary adaptations of older works**

#### 1. *Black Lizard* [*Kurotokage*] (Screening)

Introductory lecture introducing the work of Director Kinji Fukasaku, lead actor Miwa Akihiro, and Edogawa Rampo's "unwholesome" detective stories.

#### 2. Edogawa Rampo's *Gemini*

Lecture: The birth of the uncanny and the "ero guro" genre in Japanese popular culture.  
Reading: Nakamura Miri, chapter 2 of *Monstrous Bodies* (on Edogawa Rampo and the uncanny)

#### 3. Kitano Takeshi: *Zatoichi*

Lecture: Introduction to Kitano Takeshi's work

Reading: Karatsu, Rie. "Between Comedy and Kitch: Kitano's *Zatoichi* and Kurosawa's Traditions of "Jidaigeki" Comedies".

### **Part 2: Comedy**

#### 4. Itami Jūzō, *Tampopo*:

Lecture: Introduction to Itami Jūzō's work

Serper, Zvika, "Eroticism in Itami's "The Funeral" and "Tampopo": Juxtaposition and Symbolism."

#### 5. *Detroit Metal City*.

Short Lecture: introduction of the work, and the reproduction of Glam Rock in Japanese popular culture.

Reading: Manga (shōnen manga with furigana), Japanese and English, focus on translation of jokes, what humor travels across culture, what does not.

### **Part 3: Gender and pop culture**

#### 6. *Helter Skelter*

Lecture: Introduction to the work of Okazaki Kyoko and Ninagawa Mika.

Reading: Karatsu, Rie: "Female Voice and Occidentalism in Mika Ninagawa's *Helter Skelter* (2012): Adapting Kyoko Okazaki to the Screen."

#### 7. Fieldtrip to Fushimi Inari Shrine (Kyoto)

Reading: Papp, Zilia. "Monster Landscapes" Chapter 7 of Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime, and Japanese Cinema.

#### 8. *Kamikaze Girls*

Lecture: Introduction to the concept of "girl power" in Japanese pop culture, the Yankee subculture, and Gothic & Lolita Fashion

Reading: Winge, Theresa. "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita."

#### Part 4: Animation

##### 9. Kon Satoshi: *Sennen joyuu*

Lecture: Introduction to the work of Kon Satoshi, or “Ghibli for adults”

Reading: Ogg, Kerin, “Lucid Dreams, False Awakenings: Figures of the Fan in Kon Satoshi.”

##### 10. Kon Satoshi: *Perfect Blue*

Lecture: Otaku culture

Reading: Norris, Craig. “Perfect Blue and the negative representation of fans.”

(Also recommended: Azuma Hiroki’s *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals*)

##### 11. Hosoda Mamoru: *Wolf Children Ame & Yuki*

Lecture: Introduction to the work of Hosoda Mamoru and Shinkai Makoto; which of them is “the new Miyazaki”?

Hall, Chris G. “Totoros, Boar Gods, and River Spirits: Nature Spirits as Intermediaries in the Animation of Hayao Miyazaki.”

##### 12. Shinkai Makoto: *Kimi no na wa*

Lecture: On the commercial domestic and worldwide success of *Kimi no na wa*

Readings:

1. LaMarre, Thomas. “Shinkai Makoto’s Cloud Media (On *Kimi no na wa*)”

2. Swale, Alistair. “Anime as Magic”, Chapter 5 of *Anime Aesthetics; Japanese Animation and the “Post-Cinematic” Imagination*.

##### 13. Student presentations & discussion

(About ten Powerpoint slides, no longer than 15 minutes; after class finishes rewrite parts of paper based on peer & instructor questions & comments)

##### 14. Student presentations & discussion