Cinema and Society: Post-War Japan 1945-present
Jennifer Coates
Undergraduate level course

Instructor: Jennifer Coates
Class meetings: Tuesday and Thursday 1:10-2:40pm

How does cinema engage with social issues? We often look to popular films to illustrate a particular social problem or historical situation, but how can we critically understand the relationship between cinema and everyday life?

This course offers students an introduction to Film Studies, through examining film representations of key social issues in post-war Japan. Using critical film analysis, we will examine how social change has been represented on screen in Japan from 1945, a period often understood as the ‘golden age’ of classical narrative cinema. While popular cinema is never a true reflection of a period in time, films, and the discourse around films, can tell us much about the concerns of a particular era. At the same time, critical analysis of a film must account for the socio-political and historical context in which it was made. This course examines how film plays a part in our understanding of our everyday worlds.

Each week introduces a particular social issue through a popular film text. Progressing chronologically, reading materials from the fields of Film Studies and History are juxtaposed to generate an understanding of post-war Japanese cinema deeply grounded in the social, political, and historical context. The course is intended for any undergraduate student in any department interested in Japanese cinema and its history. Students wishing to audit this class are welcome to do so. No prior knowledge of the Japanese language is required; all film texts are subtitled and readings are in English. Students are welcome to expand their independent reading to include Japanese sources, and will be supported in class to share this research with classmates.

Assignments
1. Each student taking this class for credit is required to prepare 1 in-class presentation (maximum 10 minutes) for 20% of the final grade. Presentations can summarize and assess an assigned reading, or demonstrate an in-depth visual analysis of a short film clip.
2. Each student taking this class for credit is required to write an original research essay on a topic of their choice (maximum 3000 words) for 60% of the final grade.
3. Attendance and participation in class discussion will make up 20% of the final grade.

Course Goals
• To acquire Film Studies terminology to critically analyze film texts
• To become familiar with the key social issues in post-war Japan and popular discourse surrounding these issues
• To build research skills to produce a final paper generated from class presentations and discussions
Grading policy:
Students will receive letter grades in all courses for which they are registered. Grades are assigned on the basis of in-class presentations, written papers, attendance, and preparation. A final grade cannot be improved by reexamination or additional work.
The grading system is as follows:
A excellent (thorough mastery of course material & concepts)
B good (proficient grasp of most course material & concepts)
C fair (general understanding of principal course material & concepts)
D poor but passing (superficial familiarity with some course material) (credit toward degree is determined by home school)
F failure (the grade of F is a final grade and is not subject to reexamination)

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

Course Schedule
Tuesday 4 September
Introduction to Japanese Cinema
Core topics of the class will be introduced and readings for presentation assigned.
Film: 100 Years of Japanese Cinema (Nihon eiga no hyaku nen), Ōshima Nagisa, 1995

Thursday 6 September
Post-war Japan and Defeat on Film
Themes: Japan’s defeat in the Asia Pacific War and World War II
Film: No Regrets for Our Youth (Waga seishun ni kui nashi), Kurosawa Akira, 1946

Tuesday 11 September
‘Hansei’ Cinema
Themes: ‘hansei’ (self-reflection), and film as ‘reflexive horizon’ for social change
Film: Drunken Angel (Yoidore tenshi), Kurosawa Akira, 1948

Thursday 13 September
Cinema and Occupation
Themes: The Allied Occupation of Japan (1945-1952)
Film: Carmen Comes Home, Kinoshita Keisuke, 1951
Tuesday 18 September

**Censorship and the Cinema**
Themes: censorship practice and ‘democratization cinema’
Film: *One Wonderful Sunday* (*Subarashiki nichiyōbi*), Kurosawa Akira, 1947

Thursday 20 September

**Minority Representation on Film (1)**
Themes: Buraku representation
Film: *Apostasy* (*Hakai*), Ichikawa Kon, 1948

Tuesday 25 September

**Gender and the New Constitution**
Themes: Japan’s 1947 Constitution, gender equality, and the star system
Film: *The Flavour of Green Tea Over Rice* (*Ochazuke no aji*), Ozu Yasujirō, 1952

Thursday 27 September

**The Post-war Family**
Themes: War memory and the generational gap
Film: *The Tragedy of Japan* (*Nihon no higeki*), Kinoshita Keisuke, 1953

Tuesday 2 October

**Field trip**
Kyoto city cinema sites (walking tour)

Thursday 4 October

**Youth Culture and the Taiyōzoku Genre Film**
Themes: Teenage culture, leisure, and sexuality
Film: *Crazed Fruit* (*Kurutta kaji*), Nakahira Kō, 1956
Tuesday 9 October
‘Income-Doubling’ and the Middle-Class
Themes: Post-occupation prosperity, consumerism
Film: *Good Morning (Ohayo)*, Ozu Yasujirō, 1959

Thursday 11 October
**Nuclear Imaginaries**
Themes: Memories of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear testing, and US-Japan relations
Film: *Lucky Dragon Number 5 (Daigo fukuryū maru)*, Shindō Kaneto, 1959

Tuesday 16 October
**Masculinity and Modern Japan**
Themes: Changing masculine performances and ideologies
Film: *Abashiri Prison (Abashiri Bangaichi)*, Ishii Teruo, 1965

Thursday 18 October
**The Long Defeat**
Themes: ‘Post-war’ discourse in 1960s Japan, new documentary film styles, ethnofiction
Film: *A Man Vanishes (Ningen johatsu)*, Imamura Shōhei, 1967

Tuesday 23 October
**Minority Representation on Film (2)**
Themes: Gender, early understandings of ‘trans’ in post-war Japan
Reading: Ko, Mika. “‘Neo-documentarism’in Funeral Parade of Roses: the new realism of Matsumoto Toshio.” *Screen* 52, no. 3 (2011): 376-390.
Film: *Funeral Parade of Roses (Bara no soretsu)*, Matsumoto Toshio, 1969
Thursday 25 October

**Genre and Gender: The Yakuza Film**
Themes: The development of the yakuza film gender, and performances of gender tropes

Tuesday 6 November

**Documentary Film and the Women’s Movement**
Themes: Feminism, ‘woman’s lib’, and documentary cinema

Thursday 8 November

**War Memory in Post-war Japan**
Themes: War memories, victimhood, animation
Film: *Grave of the Fireflies (Hotaru no haka)*, Takahata Isao, 1988

Tuesday 13 November

**Images of Migration in East Asia**
Themes: Migration, race politics, futures

Thursday 15 November

**Minority Representation on Film (3)**
Themes: Representing Okinawa
Film: *Sonatine (Sonatine)*, Kitano Takeshi, 1993

Tuesday 20 November

**Field trip** Kyoto Uzumasa Eigamura

Thursday 22 November

**J-horror and ‘hype’**
Themes: Exploring how Japanese cinema met new audiences around the world
Film: *Ringu (The Ring)*, Nakata Hideo, 1998

Tuesday 27 November

**International Co-Productions and National Identity**
Themes: International filmmaking collaborations, nostalgia, and national identity
Film: *Café Lumiere (Kōhi jiko)* Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 2003

Thursday 29 November

**Single-Parent Families and the Working Class**
Themes: Family, single-parents, working-class issues, outsider issues
Film: *Nobody Knows (Dare mo shiranai)*, Koreeda Hirokazu, 2004

Tuesday 4 December

**Precarious Families in Modern Japan**
Themes: Employment uncertainty and family life
Film: *Tokyo Sonata (Tokyo sonata)*, Kurosawa Kiyoshi, 2008

Thursday 6 December

**Disaster Imaginaries**
Themes: Post-Fukushima future imaginaries
Film: *Your Name (Kimi no na wa)*, Shinkai Makoto, 2016