

Course Title: Media Kyoto: Japanese Popular Culture in City Space
Instructor: Caitlin Casiello
Fall 2024

Brief Course Description:

When you walk through Kyoto, how do you picture yourself? Are you treading the ancient paths of Heian-era magicians? Are you floating through the air drawn by the echoes of your friends at a restaurant up ahead? Do you imagine yourself meeting geisha, tanuki, and fierce warriors? By exploring many images of Kyoto, we will consider how the mediated image of Kyoto informs our own experience of life in the city and our own ideas of what “Japan” means.

This course draws on modern/contemporary Japanese media texts to explore how the city of Kyoto is imagined as both fantasy and real space in media. We will look at media depicting Kyoto, made in Kyoto, or engaging with the concept of “Kyoto” and its associated tropes. This includes considering the historical position of Kyoto as the “ancient capital” of Japan, as a center of media production, and as a space perceived as being at the intersection of “traditional”/“modern” Japan. Students will learn how to analyze media and space. This includes how to write about visual media using tools from film and media studies, but also how to write autoethnography on their experiences in Kyoto as a mediated city. The course further includes class field trips and individual student site trips in order to consider how the works we watch in class are integrated into the city itself. Course materials include film, anime, manga, and video games.

Course Objectives:

1. Consider how local space and global popular culture interact in the case of Kyoto and Japanese popular culture.
2. Learn the history of film and media production in Kyoto and Japan more broadly.
3. Analyze Japanese film and media in writing and discussion; engage with physical space as another form of media.
4. Reflect on lived experience within Kyoto in relation to media objects.

Media Kyoto: Japanese Popular Culture in City Space

Prof. Caitlin Casiello
(she/her/hers)

Class: MW 1:10-2:30

Screenings: TBA

Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday afternoons

course website: TBA

Course Description

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Goals of the course

1. Consider how local space and global popular culture interact in the case of Kyoto and Japanese popular culture.
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ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Postings (250 words)

By 9 am on Wednesday

Personal site report (2-3 pages)

Your choice of dates

Midterm paper (4-6 pages)

October 9

Research Presentation (10 minutes)

Will be scheduled in class

Research Paper (6-8 pages)

December 11

1. **Participation:** Class will be heavily based on participation of the students. The goal is to practice thinking out loud expressing ideas about media with colleagues (your fellow

students.) Besides participating in class discussion, we can discuss alternative forms of participation such as leading discussion (preparing questions, presenting on a reading) for one class session, meeting with me in office hours to discuss, or contributing additional comments on the class forum (replies to other students.)

2. **Weekly Postings** (around 250 words): a short reflection on the screenings or readings due by midnight the night before class on the course website. The goal is to show you have thought about the screenings and materials; I will not be grading these except to confirm you submitted them. I will be using them to see what is confusing or difficult, so please ask questions.
3. **Personal Site Report** (2-3 pages): You will visit a site related to the course themes and write a report on what you saw there. These will be shared on the course website so the rest of the class can get to know your location as well. Alternative formats such as audio recordings (e.g. podcast format), video essays, or interactive games/visual novels will be accepted. You are welcome to choose your own location but I will also provide several options.
4. **Midterm paper** (4-6 pages): For this paper, you will write on one of the works we have watched or discussed in class up to the due date. You may conduct a formal analysis of the work or research some element of the work's history, production, or reception. The goal is to demonstrate the ability to present an argument on the topic of Japanese popular culture. You may build on one of your weekly postings or use the midterm paper as a jumping-off point for the final paper as long as you submit the sufficient amount of new writing.
5. **Research Presentation** (10 minutes + 1-2 page write-up): A presentation of your ideas leading up to the research paper. We will schedule 1-2 per class session starting in the latter half of the course. Each student will submit a 1-2 page reflection afterwards. The goal is to practice presenting ideas orally in front of colleagues and to get feedback on your final paper project.
6. **Research paper** (10-12 pages): You will write a paper which makes an argument based on research about a work related to class themes. You are encouraged to also use formal analysis. The goal is to show you can conduct research in this field, analyze sources, and craft an argument based on texts which shows your unique point of view. If you would like to propose an alternative format (video essay, creative assignment), please speak to me and we will work out a balanced way of demonstrating course objectives in your new format.

GRADES

25% Participation
5% Weekly Postings
5% Personal Site Report
20% Midterm paper
15% Presentation
30% Final Paper

POLICIES

Accessibility: The course will be designed to encourage many forms of engagement for students of different abilities. I encourage you to speak to me if you feel you need accommodations to

fully participate in coursework. If you have a disability that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the objectives of this course, please contact the university's office for disability services.

Attendance & Participation: Students are expected to attend all course meetings and screenings. Participation grades will be based on engagement in class, but I am open to other forms of participation (e.g. if you lead discussion one session, if you respond to your classmates' weekly postings, if you post more in the Utena forum, if you email me questions about course material or come to office hours to discuss.)

Classroom Environment: All students should be respectful of each others' experiences and perspectives. I will intervene when discussions could cause harm to attendees based on racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, or anti-religious bias. I hope we can all learn new things from each other as a community.

Content Warnings: Many of the works discussed will feature violence and difficult scenes; I will endeavor to warn for sexual violence, racist violence, and self-harm/suicide both in writing (on the syllabus and course page) and verbally in lecture. These warnings are given so that all students may be able to fully participate in the course. Let me know if you think my warnings are insufficient.

Reporting Sexual Violence: If you have experienced sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking or sexual exploitation on campus or between members of the community, the university provides resources, both confidential and nonconfidential, to help. Faculty (including myself), staff, and other people in supervisory roles (including RAs) are mandatory reporters, which means we must report all allegations of the above-listed crimes to Columbia University's Title IX office; the Title IX office will then reach out to offer options for how to proceed. If I believe you are about to make an allegation, I will stop you to confirm that you are aware I cannot keep the conversation confidential.

Electronics in Class: You are allowed to use devices to take notes in class and to Google-check me if you feel the need to. I won't be policing electronics usage, but you will get more out of the class if you focus on the class (seems obvious, I know.)

Email & Contact: All communication will be through the course website or to your university email addresses, so check them. I am available via my university email address. I will be sure to respond to emails within 1-2 business days.

Format: Monday classes will be lecture on the topic of the week with discussion. Screenings will be scheduled on Monday or Tuesday evening. Wednesday class will be guided discussions.

Grading & Feedback: Grading in humanities disciplines is often subjective; I will endeavor as much as possible to offer guidance and explanation for grades given. As part of this process, I will ask you to grade your own progress as well at certain points during the semester. Similarly, I will provide feedback forms for you to comment on my progress during the semester. I am happy

to give extensions on deadlines if you ask before the deadline and I am also happy to give students the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit work for a better grade.

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity: I encourage students to discuss course materials with each other and I am open to many forms of collaborative work if proposed to me ahead of time. However, written assignments must be the student's own work and use of sources must be correctly cited. We will go over correct citations and when to cite sources in class but I encourage you to ask and err on the side of citing more if you're unsure. **“AI” resources such as ChatGPT must be cited, including the prompt you used, and must not be used to generate text you submit as your own writing.**

SITE VISITS:

As schedules and budget allows, we will be taking field trips to media/film related sites around Kyoto. These are the current possibilities to be finalized in the first and second week of class:

Kyoto International Museum of Manga

Toy Film Museum

The Museum of Kyoto film theater

Toei Eigamura Kyoto Studio Park

Seimei Shrine

COURSE SCHEDULE

9/2 & 9/4

Week 1: Walking Through Kyoto

Readings: Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City, from *The Practice of Everyday Life*

Screening: *Hello World* (anime film, dir. Itō Takehito, 2019)

UNIT 1: HEIAN HISTORIES

9/9 & 9/11

Week 2: Media Genji Bonanza

Reading: Asaki yume mishi manga; other reading TBD

Screening: *The Tale of Genji* (anime film, 1987); *Genji Monogatari Sennenki* (television anime, selected episodes, 2009)

9/16 – NO CLASS

9/18

Week 3: Law & Order in Heian

Reading: Donald Richie, “The Production History of Rashomon” in *Rashomon Effects*

Screening: *Rashōmon* (live action film; dir. Kurosawa Akira, 1950)

Content warning for sexual violence

9/23 & 9/25

Week 4: Protecting the Ancient Capital

Reading:

Laura Miller, "Extreme Makeover for a Heian-Era Wizard."
Mia Tillonen. "Constructing and Contesting the Shrine: Tourist Performances at Seimei Shrine, Kyoto."
Screening: *Onmyōji* (live action film, dir. Takira Yojirō, 2001)

9/30 & 10/2

Week 5: Video Game Cosmology

Reading:

Steve Kent, *The Ultimate History of Video Games*

Screening: *Cosmology of Kyoto* (video game, 1995)

10/7 & 10/9

Week 6: Images/Mirrors of the Capital

Reading:

Examples of *rakuchu rakugai-zu*

Tosa, Naoko, et al. "Interactive Rakuchu Rakugai-zu (views in and around Kyoto)."

Screening: *Kyōsōgiga* (original net anime, selected episodes, 2011)

10/14 & 10/16: FALL BREAK

UNIT 2: KYOTO PRODUCTION AND VIEWING PRACTICES

10/21 & 10/23

Week 7: Kyoto Film Production

Readings: Diane Wei Lewis, "Kyoto – The ‘Hollywood of Japan’"

Screening: *Bushido, Samurai Saga* (live action film, dir. Imai Tadashi, 1963)

10/28 & 10/30

Week 8: Kyoto Animation

Reading: Dani Cavallaro, "Kyoto Animation in Context," in *Kyoto Animation: A Critical Study and Filmography*

Screening: *Hibike Euphonium* (television anime, selected episodes, 2015)

11/4 – NO CLASS

11/6

Week 9: Local Viewing

Readings: Jennifer Coates, "Alternative Viewership Practices in Kyoto, Japan"

Screening: The Museum of Kyoto theater trip

UNIT 3: MODERN KYOTO

11/11 & 11/13

Week 10: The Imagined Geisha

Reading: Anne Allison, "Memoirs of the Orient," in *Journal of Japanese Studies* (2001): 381-398

Screening: *A Geisha* (live action film, dir. Mizoguchi Kenji)

11/18 & 11/20

Week 11: Kyoto Women on the Verge

Reading: Kelly Foreman, "Bad Girls Confined: Okuni, Geisha, and the Negotiation of Female Performance Space" in *Bad Girls of Japan*

Screening: *Flowers Have Fallen* (live action film, dir. Ishida Tamizō, 1938)

11/25 & 11/27

Week 12: Folklore & Family

Reading: Selection of tanuki and other folklore stories

Screening: *Uchōten Kazoku* (television anime, selected episodes, 2013)

12/2 & 12/4

Week 13: Time Loops

Reading: Marc Steinberg. "Condensing the media mix: Multiple possible worlds in The Tatami Galaxy."

Screening: *The Tatami Galaxy* (television anime, selected episodes, 2010)

Final papers due 12/11