

# Media Kyoto: Japanese Popular Culture in City Space

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(she/her/hers)

Class: TBA  
Screenings: TBA  
Office hours: TBA  
course website: TBA

## 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.

## Goals of the course

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.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Postings (250 words)	[Date]
Personal site report (2-3 pages)	[Date]
Midterm paper (4-6 pages)	[Date]
Research Presentation (10 minutes)	[Date]
Research Paper (6-8 pages)	[Date]

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:** Seminar will be primarily discussion; I will direct or ask questions, but I want your interests to lead us. As necessary, I will contribute background information on the Japanese or film/media context.

**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. Please also note that plagiarism is not just the intentional, but also the unintentional use of another's words or ideas without proper attribution. **"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.**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1: Walking Through Kyoto**

Screening: *Night is Short, Walk on Girl*

### **Week 2: Protecting the Ancient Capital**

#### **Field trip to Seimei Shrine**

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*

### **Week 3: 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*

**Field Trip: Toy Film Museum in Kyoto - to be scheduled**

### **Week 4: Law & Order in Heian**

Reading: Akutagawa Ryunosuke, "In A Grove," "Rashōmon"

Donald Richie, "The Production History of Rashomon" in *Rashomon Effects*

Screening: *Rashōmon*

Content Warning for sexual violence

### **Week 5: Video Game Cosmology**

Reading:

Selections from Steve Kent, *The Ultimate History of Video Games*

Screening: Cosmology of Kyoto (playing together or watch playthrough)

### **Week 6: Field Trip to Kyoto International Museum of Manga**

Reading: TBA

### **Week 7: The Imagined Geisha**

Reading:

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

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

Screening: *A Geisha* (dir. Mizoguchi Kenji)

### **Week 8: Kyoto/Kansai Connections II: Osaka**

Reading: Keiko McDonald, "Form and Function in " Osaka Elegy"." in *Film Criticism* 6.2 (1982): 35-44

Screening: *Naniwa Elegy* (dir. Mizoguchi Kenji)

### **Week 9: Folklore & Family**

Reading: Selection of tanuki and other folklore stories

Screening: *Uchōten Kazoku*

### **Week 10: Local Viewing**

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

Screening: **Field trip to Museum of Kyoto screening** (TBD)

### **Week 11: Kyoto Animation**

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

Screening: *Hibike Euphonium*

### **Week 12: Break**

### **Week 13: Field trip to Toei Eigamura**

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

Screening: *Battles Without Honor or Humanity*

### **Week 14: Time Loops**

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

Screening: *The Tatami Galaxy*

### **Week 15: Conclusions**

#### **Final Papers due**

Screening: *Hello World* (2019)