Global Transformations of Japanese Fantasy

Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies

Instructor: Drew Richardson
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Time and Location: Mondays & Fridays 1:10-2:40pm
Office Hours: Mondays & Fridays

Objectives

Trans-cultural and Trans-media Adaptations

This course is a collaborative exploration of adaptations of Japanese fantasy. In this course, we examine the transformations of the fantasy genre across media forms and national boundaries. This course argues that the genre of Japanese fantasy emerged through a network of trans-cultural and trans-media adaptations. Our exploration of the fantasy genre includes the transnational circulation of folklore, historical romance, high fantasy, dark fantasy, sword & sorcery, cosmic horror, and secondary-world fantasy (*isekai*). This includes the emergence of Dungeons & Dragons in Japan and the United States, and its divergent adaptations as Japanese role-playing games (JRPGs) and 'Western' or computer role-playing games (CRPGs). Other topics include the emergence of Japan as the most prolific producer of Lovecraftian horror, the adaptations of Lovecraft's work in a Japanese cultural context, and the subsequent return of this influence to the U.S. in the forms of dark fantasy video games. Trans-cultural and trans-media adaptations inform each other to produce the patterns of transmission that shape understandings of Japanese fantasy today.

Learning Outcomes

SKILL DEVELOPMENT
Identifying key arguments through close reading
Reading challenging material across multiple media forms (monographs, articles, manga, games, etc.)
Building confidence in group dynamics through tabletop roleplaying
Developing team-writing and organization skills for group projects
Practicing teamwork, collaboration, and specialization.
Problem-solving in groups and conflict resolution

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE
Understanding literature from the perspective of genre
Detailed knowledge of major movements in Japanese fantasy
Historical contextualization of the fantasy genre within and without Japan
Thinking through globalization and transnational media
Analysis of processes of trans-cultural and trans-media adaptation
Theorizing different methods of collaboration

Class Materials

All texts are available as .pdfs on the course website.

Evaluation

Discussion Leadership & Participation	25%
Field Trip Reflections	25%
Group Project	25%
Final Exam	25%

Discussion Leaders (25%)

Three times throughout the semester students are responsible for leading a discussion on an assigned reading for approximately 20 minutes. The aim of this assignment is to moderate and foster discussion by asking questions and taking a critical approach to the text. It is not expected for students to know everything about an assigned reading; rather, they are expected to come prepared with questions and observations. Evaluation in this category includes participation – not only during your assigned discussion leader days but throughout the semester. Recommended texts for discussion each day are highlighted on the schedule below.

Field Trips & Reflections (25%)

This course includes at least five field trips to historical sites in the Kyoto and Kansai area. Participation in these trips is mandatory. Please be aware that these trips may be scheduled outside of ordinary class hours, and most trips are scheduled on Saturdays. Full details will be confirmed at a later date (and may include additional excursions.) After each field trip, students are required to complete a short reflection discussing their experiences in the context of relevant course readings. Details and location of these trips are subject to change.

Monday, January 11 – FIELD TRIP #0 (OPTIONAL) - Go Nagai Exhibit
"Eternal Spirits - Go Nagai" at the Museum of Kyoto
https://www.bunpaku.or.jp/exhi_special_post/20261128-20270111/

Saturday, February 6 – FIELD TRIP #1
"Humans, Aliens, and Deities Get-Together Exhibit" at the Kyoto Manga Museum
https://kyotomm.jp/en/ee/uchujin-gokon/

Saturday, February 13 – FIELD TRIP #2
Call of Cthulhu roleplaying session at KCJS with Damon Lang, author of *The Sutra of Pale Leaves*

Wednesday, February 24 – FIELD TRIP #3:
"Moto Hagio: Fascination with Europe" at the Asahi Group Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art.
https://www.30th.asahigroup-oyamazaki.com/en/exhibitions/hagiomoto/

Saturday, March 13 - FIELD TRIP #4
Dragon Quest: The Dive Exhibit at Grand Front Osaka
https://www.dragonquest.jp/dq40th-dive/

To be Announced - FIELD TRIP #5
Anime Pilgrimage walk with Stevie Suan

Group Project (25%)

This project is an exercise in two kinds of adaptation: trans-media adaptation and transcultural adaptation. It asks students to design a blueprint for a trans-media and transcultural adaptation of a fantasy text of their choice. In other words, they are free to choose any fantasy text but must create an adaptation in a different medium and for a different, transnational audience.

Students will decide what form of media is best suited for adapting their text (TV series, film, dramatic performance, video game, board game, card game, novel, manga, etc.) After choosing a new medium to adapt their project, students will develop a detailed blueprint explaining their choice, the strengths of the medium, their imagined audience, and several key elements specific to that medium (scenes and narrative blocking for film, for instance; or the gameplay systems of a video game).

They will also decide what considerations need to be accounted for in adapting it for a different audience (i.e. a Japanese media product in Taiwan, or an American media product in Japan.)

Alongside the completed group project, each group member will submit a one-page reflection discussing their contributions to the team.

Final Exam (25%)

The final exam is cumulative and written in class. It consists of short and long answer questions and is designed to be an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the semester.

Lecture Schedule & Readings

Week 1: INTRODUCTION

Friday, January 15

Lecture: 'Eastern' Games VS 'Western' Games / Dichotomies of Fantasy
Viewing: *Pokémon, Yo-Kai Watch, Elden Ring, Touhou Project*
Readings:*: Time* Magazine, Pokémon Special Issue, Jan. 2024, excerpts.
Mia Consalvo, "*Atari to Zelda: Japan's Videogames in Global Contexts,*" 190-208

Week 2: H.P. LOVECRAFT AND COSMIC HORROR

Monday, January 18

Lecture: Introduction to H.P. Lovecraft and Cosmic Horror; Racism, Cosmic Horror, and the Unknown
Viewing: *Annihilation* (2014), *Color Out of Space* (2019), *Lovecraft Country*
Readings: H.P. Lovecraft, "The Color Out of Space"
H.P. Lovecraft "The Music of Erich Zann," narrated by B.J. Harrison on *Pseudopod*: https://pseudopod.org/2008/07/25/pseudopod-100-the-music-of-erich-zann/
H.P. Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," 1-3 required; 3-27 optional

Friday, January 22

Lecture: H.P. Lovecraft in a Global Context

Viewing: *Kwaidan* (1965)
Readings: Manning, P. (2019). Goblin spiders, ghosts of flowers and butterfly fantasies: Lafcadio Hearn's transnational, transmedia and trans-species aesthetics of the weird. *Japan Forum*, *32*(2), 259–283.
Lafcadio Hearn, *Kwaidan,* 50-52, 64-70, 91-93.

Week 3: REST WEEK - NO CLASS

Note: Regular classes for this week are replaced by field trips on Saturday, February 6th and Saturday, February 13th.

Monday, January 25 – No Class

Friday, January 29 – No Class

Week 4: ERO-GURO-NANSENSU AND EARLY LOVECRAFT IN JAPAN

Wednesday, February 3: 4:40pm-6:10pm
Lecture: Ero-guro-nansensu and Early Lovecraft in Japan
Viewing: n/a
Readings: Edogawa Ranpo, "The Human Chair."

Friday, February 5
Lecture: Manga & Anime Adaptations of H.P. Lovecraft
Viewing: Mizuki Shigeru, *Chitei no Ashioto*; Morohoshi Daijiro, *Yokai Hunter*, *Ito Junji Collection*;
Readings H.P. Lovecraft "The Call of Cthulhu"
H.P. Lovecraft "The Dunwich Horror."
Tanabe Gou, *The Call of Cthulhu,* 15-64, 100-156, 196-283.

Saturday, February 6 – FIELD TRIP #1
"Humans, Aliens, and Deities Get-Together Exhibit" at the Kyoto Manga Museum

Week 5: JAPANESE ADAPTATIONS OF LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR

Monday, February 8
Lecture: Japanese Writers of the Cthulhu Mythos
Viewing: n/a
Readings: Selections from *Lair of the Hidden Gods: Night Voices, Night Journeys.* (2005)
Inoue Masahiko, trans. Edward Lipsett, "Night Voices, Night Journeys."
Kamino Okina, trans. Steven P. Venti, "27 May 1945."

Friday, February 12
Lecture: Anime and Roleplaying in Japan: The Rise of *Call of Cthulhu* TTRPG
Viewing: *Haiyore! Nyaruko-san, Housing Complex C*
Readings: Björn-Ole Kamm, "A history of table talk and live-action role-playing in Japan: Replays and the horror genre as drivers of popularity." *Simulation & Gaming* 50, no. 5 (2019): 621-644.
Uchiyama Yasujiro, *R'yleh Antique: TTRPG Replay, the Cthulhu Mythos*
"Alone Against the Flame," *Call of Cthulhu TTRPG* Single Player Exercise

Saturday, February 13 – FIELD TRIP #2
Call of Cthulhu roleplaying session at KCJS with Damon Lang, author of *The Sutra of Pale Leaves*

Week 6: CIRCULATIONS OF SWORD & SORCERY AND DARK FANTASY

Monday, February 15
Lecture: Lessons in Barbarism: From Sword & Sorcery to Post-apocalyptic Fantasy
Viewing: *Conan the Barbarian* (1982 film); "Hoichi the Earless" from *Kwaidan*
Fist of the North Star, Violence Jack, Mad Max
Readings: Robert E. Howard, "The Tower of the Elephant," and "Gods of the North" in *Conan the Cimmerian Barbarian: The Complete Weird Tales Omnibus.*
Joshi, S. T. "Barbarism vs. Civilization: Robert E. Howard and H. P. Lovecraft in Their Correspondence." *Studies in the Fantastic* 1 (2008): 95.
Fist of the North Star, Vol. 1.

Friday, February 19
Lecture: From the Black Swordsmen to the Golden Age
Viewing: *The Rose of Versailles, Full Metal Alchemist, Final Fantasy Tactics*
Readings: Miura Kentaro, "The Dark Swordsman," *Berserk,* 1-91.
Gene Park, "Remembering Kentaro Miura, legendary creator of 'Berserk,' which inspired countless fantasy stories," *Washington Post* May 20, 2021.

Week 7: CIRCULATIONS OF EPIC AND HIGH FANTASY

Monday, February 22
Lecture: Cosmology and Christianity in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*;
The *Lord of the Rings* in a Japanese Context
Viewing: *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy (2001-2003)
Readings: J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," excerpts.
J.R.R. Tolkien ,"The Monster and the Critics, excerpts.
Robert Ellwood, "The Japanese Hobbit."

Wednesday, February 24 – FIELD TRIP #3:
"Moto Hagio: Fascination with Europe" at the Asahi Group Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art.

Friday, February 26
Lecture: Re-Orienting the Cosmos: *Teito Monogatari* as Epic "Asian" Fantasy; The Onmyoji Boom
Viewing: *Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis* (1988); *Onmyoji* (2023)
Readings: Noriko Reader, *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present*, 113.
Aramata Hiroshi, "Reflections on *Teito Monogatari.*"
Laura Miller, "Extreme Makeover for a Heian-era Wizard," Mechademia, Vol. 2.

Week 8: SPRING BREAK
March 1st to 7th (No Classes)

Week 9: FANTASTIC ROOTS: JAPANESE AND CHINESE FOLKLORE & LEGEND

Monday, March 8 - *No Class; Rest Day for Fieldtrip on Sat. March 13th*

Friday, March 12

Lecture: Yokai, Monster Culture and Encyclopedias
Viewing: Various *yokai* prints and materials
Dreams (Kurosawa)
Readings: Toriyama Sekien, trans. Matt Alt and Hiroko Yoda, *Japandemonium Illustrated,* 1-75.
Jippensha Ikku, "The Monster Takes a Bride," trans. Adam Kabat, in *The River Imp and the Stinky Jewel.*

Saturday, March 13 - FIELDTRIP #4
Dragon Quest: The Dive Exhibit at Grand Front Osaka

Week 10: CHINESE CLASSICS AND JAPANESE ADAPTATIONS

Monday, March 15

Lecture: Adopting Chinese Tales as *Kidan* and *Kaidan*
Viewing: *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*
Reading: Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (New York, Penguin Classics): 110-149.

Friday, March 19

Lecture: Water Margin and Wuxia
Viewing: *Suikoden* (Hokusai illustrations, 1805), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure
Readings: Shi Nai'an, trans. J.H. Jackson, *Water Margin*, excerpts. (Optional)
Robert J. Antony, *Rats, Cats, Rogues, and Heroes: Glimpses of China's Hidden Past*, excerpts.

Week 11: FROM SUIKODEN TO HAKKENDEN TO JRPG

Monday, March 22 (Vernal Equinox Day – No Class)

Friday, March 26

Lecture: From the 'Suikoden Boom' to the *Hakkenden;* The *Hakkenden* in Popular Culture
Viewing: *Hakkenden* woodblock prints (Utagawa Kuniyoshi amongst others),
Satomi Hakkenden (1954); *Dragon Ball*, *InuYasha, Wolf Children, Romancing SaGa, Octopath Traveller*
Readings: Takizawa Bakin, Glynne Walley trans., *Eight Dogs or Hakkenden: Part One, An Ill-Considered Jest*, 273-329.
Takahashi Rumiko, *Inuyasha*, Vol. 1.

Week 12: FANTASY & ANXIETY

Monday, March 29

Lecture: Kaiju – Monsters and Memory in the Postwar
Viewing: *Godzilla vs Mechagodzilla*. Directed by Fukuda Juni, Toho, 1974.

Readings: Igarashi, Yoshikuni. "Naming the Unnameable,"*Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture*, 1945-1970: excerpts.
Adams, Alex, and Aaron Kent, eds. *Devastation Songs: An Anthology of Kaiju Writing*. Wales: Broken Sleep Books, 2024: excerpts.

Friday, April 2

Lecture: From the Lost Decade to 3/11, Revisiting Napier's "Cinema of Deassurance"
Viewing: *On Your Mark, Princess Mononoke, Spirited Away*
Readings: Hayao Miyaziki, *Starting Point: 1979-1996*, excerpts.
Susan Napier, *Miyazaki World*, excerpts.
Rachael Hutchinson, "Absentee Parents in the JRPG," and "Nuclear Discourse in *Final Fantasy,*" 103-152.

Week 13: MEDIA CASE STUDIES: MAGICAL GIRLS & WARRIORS OF LIGHT

Monday, April 5

Lecture: Magical Girls, Sailor Moon, and Japanese Animation
Viewing: *Sailor Moon*, *Puella Madoka Magika*
Reading: Saito, Kumiko. "Magic, 'Shojo,' and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society," *The Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol. 73.1 (2014):143-164.

Friday, April 9

Lecture: Dungeons and Dragons and Computer Roleplaying Games (CRPGs); Dungeons and Dragons and Japanese Roleplaying Games (JRPGs)
Viewing: Colossal Cave Adventure; *Record of Lodoss War* (1986); *Final Fantasy; Dragon Quest*
Readings: Matt Barton and Shane Stacks, Dungeons & Desktops: The History of Computer Role-playing Games, "Origins," 21-39.
Nathan Altice, *I Am Error*, 212-232.

Week 14: FROM D&D TO RPG AND BEYOND

Monday, April 12

Lecture: *Isekai* and Secondary World Fantasy; Global Fantasy
Viewing: *Escaflowne, Magic Knight Rayearth, Overlord, Re:Zero; Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*
Readings: Taiki Kawakami, *That Time I got Reincarnated as a Slime.*
Price, Paul. "A survey of the story elements of isekai manga." *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*, vol. 2 (2021).
Ryoko Kui, *Delicious in Dungeon*
Stevie Suan, *Anime's identity: performativity and form beyond Japan*, excerpts.

FINAL EXAM PERIOD
April 20th and 21st.

Late Work Policy

Extensions may be granted based on individual circumstances and upon request; please reach out to me as soon as possible if you are encountering any problems. Late work without timely consultation will not be accepted.

Percentage/Letter Grade Evaluation:

Letter grades are assigned based on the following conversion table.

A+ = 95-100%	B+ = 80-84%	C+ = 65-69%	F = less than 50%
A = 90-94%	B = 75-79%	C = 60-64%	
A- = 85-89%	B- = 70-74%	D = 50-59%	

Content Advisory

This course examines some texts, images, and videos that contain descriptions of violence and/or sexual violence. I will do my best to provide individual warnings in class for course materials and in presentation slides for class content that are particularly sensitive. My hope is that these notifications will help your engagement by allowing you to prepare to work through challenging material.

They are not intended to censure content nor invite students to avoid material that challenges them. On the contrary, warning students of challenging material can help their engagement by giving them the ability to take charge of their own health and learning.

I encourage you to do what you need to care for yourself. If taking care of yourself means that you need to step outside during class, either for a short time or for the rest of the class, you may do so without academic penalty. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

Academic Integrity

As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited. In practical terms, this means that, as students, all work submitted in this course, whether in draft or final form, must be your own. You must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent. Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated.

Use of Generative AI

Absent a clear statement from a course instructor granting permission, the use of Generative AI tools to complete an assignment or exam is prohibited. The unauthorized use of AI shall be treated similarly to unauthorized assistance and/or plagiarism page 11 of Standards and Discipline at https://universitypolicies.columbia.edu/content/standards-and-discipline.

Policy

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- Do not input confidential information;
- Do not input personal information;
- Do not input information that violates IP or general contract terms and conditions;
- Confirm the accuracy of the output provided by Generative AI tools;
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For more detailed information, please refer to the following page.

https://provost.columbia.edu/content/office-senior-vice-provost/ai-policy

Any cases of plagiarism or cheating will be reported to Columbia Undergraduate Global Engagement and the academic advisor at your home institution and are subject to the code of academic conduct there. In such cases, your final grade will be determined by your home institution and not by KCJS.

Students with a Disability:

If you are a student with a disability and have a Disability Services-certified 'Accommodation Letter' from your home institution, please send me this letter before the first day of class to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation and do not have an accommodations letter, you should contact the Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement at Columbia University (uge@columbia.edu).