

SYLLABUS

Introduction to Japanese Film

This course chronologically traces the history of one of the world's most innovative film industries. From its earliest days at the beginning of the 20th century, Japanese film directors have experimented with and improved upon cinema; their work has been influential not only in Japan but throughout the world. From the drama of early silent movies to the glitz of *anime* (Japanese animation), we'll cover some of the "greatest hits" of Japanese film, whether wildly popular or critically acclaimed. In addition, we'll examine some unique films and directors who are still little known outside of Japan. This exploration of cinema in Japan will offer both a new perspective on cinema itself as well as an opportunity to view the genre's development in a specific cultural context. No prior knowledge of Japanese history, language or film is presumed.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Anderson, Joseph L., and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry (Expanded Edition)*. Princeton UP, 1982. (NOTE: do not buy the older edition from 1960)
- Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 7th edition. McGraw Hill, 2004.

The Bordwell/Thompson text is a general film textbook; it will supply us with information on the art of cinema and a basic understanding of its terminology. Anderson and Richie's book is the most comprehensive "textbook" on Japanese film available to date, but it isn't complete by any means. In addition, it's somewhat out of date. Therefore, we will also be reading a few other items: secondary articles, interviews, short pieces of literature, etc. to supplement these texts. These additional items will be available through electronic reserve (ER).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

You are required to have viewed the assigned film(s) and to have done your reading for each class meeting, in full. This ensures that, as a class, we can have a lively and informed discussion on the works assigned. The main focus of this class is developing your knowledge about film and film theory in general, and about Japanese film in particular. We will explore the social history of Japanese film, its connections with film around the world, its differences from and similarities with other genres (such as literature and theater), and its manifestations as both "high art" and popular culture. Be prepared for a diverse experience! I will take up some class time with lecture, but discussion is a major component of this course.

In the third week of class there is a film **terminology quiz** based on the reading assigned for the first day of class (a glossary of film terms). Though it's a bit cheesy, a visual demonstration of some of these terms can be found in our AV library, on reserve for this class. *Basic film terms: a visual dictionary*. PN1993.45 .B27 1996

You have both an in-class **midterm** and a **final** (not comprehensive), which will involve short answers and essay questions based on the viewings, readings and class discussions. I will also be putting relevant stills and clips up on Blackboard for you to study (mostly those we will already have discussed in class). You will be shown some of these, or related stills/clips, and be asked to comment on them for both exams.

While exams are important, class **participation** is also a must. Your class participation grade is based largely on your *actual verbal participation* in the classroom (i.e. what you say out loud, which should be both pertinent to the discussion and stated at the appropriate time). Speak up, and respect others' rights to do so as well! It not only affects your grade, but makes the class much more productive and enjoyable. I am confident that we, as a group, can create an environment where everyone will feel comfortable contributing. Here are a few pointers on how to participate successfully in class discussion. The student who *consistently* makes the effort to contribute according to these guidelines will receive a grade in the A to B range. A C grade, FYI, is fairly consistent participation that shows a basic understanding of the readings and other assignments.

- If you are usually comfortable with speaking in class, then choose the moments you wish to speak carefully; more is not necessarily better. On the flipside, if you tend to be a bit quiet, don't necessarily wait until the opportunity to speak is handed to you. Be proactive. Are you shy? Prepare some comments ahead of class and read them out loud instead. Come talk to me if you'd like some help.
- Sometimes I will give you reading questions ahead of time. Sometimes I'll leave you to your own devices. In either case, as you watch and read, TAKE NOTES. Don't just breeze through. You'll be surprised at how many ideas you'll have when you look back over what you wrote down. Use these notes to prepare some comments for class.
- When you speak, state your point concisely and stay on the point under discussion. If tangential perspectives emerge, as they invariably will, write them down so you can return to the issue later. Of course, if the discussion seems ready to move in a different direction, then please proceed. I will do my best to keep us on track, but part of that responsibility is yours, too.
- Support your points on the basis of the viewings and readings. That means citing exact page numbers/scenes in the film, reading aloud short passages, identifying key terms/issues, and/or accurately summarizing in addition to stating your idea/asking your question.

I require you to post one **discussion question** (about the film and/or the readings for that week) to Blackboard by 9 a.m. most Thursdays (look in Blackboard to see what weeks you're responsible for). I will print them and hand them out to the class as food for thought. Save content questions (as in: why was that guy wearing that funny hat?) and the like for class. Posting every time, on time, will earn you a C (3/5). An overall score of 4 or 5 at the end of the semester will be earned by questions that consistently engage with the films/texts and make new connections for us to discuss.

Finally, the most important assignment in this class (and incidentally, the most time-consuming) is your final 25-30 minute oral presentation, which you will work on in groups. You will learn both Powerpoint (for making "slide shows") and i-Movie (on the Mac, for capturing stills and clips) to create a polished multi-media presentation on a

choice of topics relating to the films we saw in class. We will discuss presentation strategies; I have also scheduled sessions with ITS for learning these programs. Don't worry, we have tech support! You won't be *making* movies; you'll be making a presentation *about* movies. I'll do a presentation of my own so that you can get an idea of what I expect of you (see schedule). I will offer you a variety of topics to choose from the second week of class. Once you have learned how to use iMovie, your group will submit the **images and clips** you plan to use for your presentation. You will post these to Blackboard on March 9 along with an explanation, in 100 words or less, of why they are relevant to your topic. A more detailed **proposal** for your group presentation is due April 4th, in the form of a Powerpoint slideshow that includes: a) a detailed outline of the material you would like to cover and how you plan to approach it, b) an annotated bibliography/filmography and c) at least two of the images that your group captured and plans to use as evidence. You will post this to Blackboard as well. The **final presentations**, on May 1st, will start at 4 p.m., so if you usually have something scheduled at that hour, please *make advance plans to be there*. We'll discuss further details later.

Lastly, a note on **attendance**: needless to say, your presence in class is key to your success in this course. If you aren't here, you can't participate; chronic absenteeism will not be tolerated. You are allowed two *excused* absences (i.e., talk to me ahead of time if possible). *Each* unexcused absence (i.e. not a official medical excuse, family emergency or the like) after that will have a *significant* negative impact on your final grade.

GRADING:

Terminology Quiz	10%
Midterm	20%
Final	20%
Participation	10%
Discussion Questions	5%
Presentation Images & Clips	5%
Presentation Proposal	10%
Final Presentation	20%

SCHEDULE (subject to change):

<i>Week 1</i>	<u>Early Film in Japan</u>
January 16	No screening
January 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B&T pp. 501-506 (for terminology quiz)
January 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A&R Chapters 1-3, pp. 21-62, and “Second and Third Thoughts about the Japanese Film,” pp. 439-456
<i>Week 2</i>	
January 23	Screening (double feature!): <i>Shibukawa Bangorô</i> (1926. Dir. Tsukiyama Kôkichi) and <i>The Neighbor’s Wife and Mine (Madamu to nyôbô</i> , 1931. Dir. Gosho Heinosuke)
January 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A&R Chapters 4-6, pp. 63-125
January 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B&T Chapter 9, pp. 347-388 <p>Oral presentation topics handed out. Discuss and choose over the weekend!</p>
<i>Week 3</i>	<u>The Art of the Melodrama</u>
January 30	Screening: <i>Story of the Last Chrysanthemum (Zangiku monogatari</i> , 1939. Dir. Mizoguchi Kenji)
January 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B&T Chapter 7, pp. 229-293
February 2	Terminology Quiz (about 30 min.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kristin Strohmeier, Reference Librarian, visits
<i>Week 4</i>	<u>War films I: Propaganda</u>
February 6	Screening: <i>The War at Sea from Hawaii to Malaya (Hawai-Marê okikaisen</i> , 1942. Dir. Yamamoto Kajirô)
February 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A&R Chapters 7-8, pp. 126-158
February 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B&T pp. 128-146, “Documentary”
<i>Week 5</i>	
February 13	No screening: I-Movie training sessions Burke 001, 4-6:30 OR 7-9:30 (signup required)
February 14	Sample presentation on Miyazaki Hayao’s <i>Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi</i> , 2001) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Helmer, Communications Professor, visits
February 16	Start on Kurosawa Akira <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A&R Chapters 9-10, pp. 159-228
<i>Week 6</i>	<u>The “golden age” of Japanese cinema, part 1</u>
February 20	Screening: <i>Rashomon (Rashômon</i> , 1950. Dir. Kurosawa Akira)
February 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Akutagawa Ryûnosuke: “Rashomon” and “In A Grove” (ER)
February 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burton Porter: “Rashomon” (ER) • A&R Chapter 11, pp. 229-258

<i>Week 7</i>	<u>War films II: Critique</u>
February 27	Screening: <i>Fires on the Plain</i> (<i>Nobi</i> , 1959. Dir. Ichikawa Kon)
February 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Stahl: From <i>The Burdens of Survival</i> (ER)
March 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A&R Chapter 12, pp. 259-296
<i>Week 8</i>	<u>Post-war mass culture</u>
March 6	Screening: <i>Giants and Toys</i> (<i>Kyojin to gangu</i> , 1958. Dir. Masumura Yasuzo)
March 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B&T pp. 452-457, “Form, Style and Ideology” Review
March 9	Midterm (in class) Presentation Images & Clips due
	SPRING BREAK!
<i>Week 9</i>	<u>The “golden age” of Japanese cinema, part 2</u>
March 27	Screening: <i>Tokyo Story</i> (<i>Tôkyô monogatari</i> , 1953. Dir. Ozu Yasujirô)
March 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B&T Chapter 8, pp. 294-346, AND pp. 433-437 Noel Burch: From <i>To the Distant Observer</i> (ER)
March 30	Guest appearance by Prof. Mark Nornes from the University of Michigan! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kathe Geist: “Playing With Space” (ER) Hasumi Shigehiko: “Sunny Skies” (ER) Darrell Davis: “Ozu’s Mother” (ER)
March 31 (FRIDAY)	Public Lecture by Prof. Nornes “Dangerous Liaisons: The Traders and Traitors in Our Midst” Science Center 3024, 4-6 p.m. Mandatory.
<i>Week 10</i>	<u>Experimentation with form and style: the 1960s</u>
April 3	Screening: <i>Tokyo Drifter</i> (<i>Tôkyô nagaremono</i> , 1966. Dir. Suzuki Seijun)
April 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A&R “Terminal Essay,” pp. 457-477 B&T Chapter 6, pp. 176-228 Proposal for oral presentation due
April 6	No class meeting
<i>Week 11</i>	<u>Living inside the bubble: film in 1980s Japan</u>
April 10	Screening: <i>Tampopo</i> (1985. Dir. Itami Jûzô)
April 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charles Inouye: “In the Showhouse of Modernity” (ER)
April 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B&T Chapters 2 & 3, pp. 47-105
April 14	<i>*Open lab/work session for presentations, 2-5 p.m.</i> Highly recommended. I, and members of ITS, will be on hand to answer your specific questions.

<i>Week 12</i>	<u>New Directions, Old Influences</u>
April 17	Screening: <i>Maborosi</i> (<i>Maboroshi no hikari</i> , 1995. Dir. Kore-eda Hirokazu)
April 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron Gerow: Interview with Koreeda Hirokazu (ER)
April 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christine Marran: “Tracking the Transcendental” (ER) • Scott MacDonald: “Kano Shiho” (ER)
April 23 (SUNDAY)	Kano Shiho event, 2 p.m. in KJ Aud. Mandatory.
<i>Week 13</i>	<u>Japan and Beyond: anime’s popular victory</u> <i>Reminder: Schedule your meetings with Prof. Helmer for THIS WEEK</i>
April 24	Screening: Millennium Actress (<i>Sennen joyû</i> , 2001. Dir. Kon Satoshi)
April 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Napier: “Why Anime?” (ER) • B&T, “The Animated Film,” pp. 162-171
April 27	*We meet with P. O’Neill’s Art of Cinema class today and will present to them the cultural context of the film.
<i>Week 14</i>	
May 1	Oral presentations starting in Root 205 at 4 p.m. Plan accordingly...
May 2	No class meeting
May 4	Wrap-up and review
May 14	Final exam, 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon (Root 205)

Enjoy your summer.....!