

ANTY343: Popular Culture In/Out of Japan

Montana State University – Spring 2012

TTH2: 10-3:25pm

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Hours: TTH1-2pm

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I. Course Description:

Mass/popular culture tends to be considered “trivial” and not worthy of serious scholarly attention. However, these seemingly “trivial” matters are in fact highly significant in anthropological inquiry, as a discipline that is concerned with our everyday lives. Especially in recent years, “globalization” in the world of popular culture has become even more intense, as we can see by the influx and popularity of such Japanese cultural materials as video games, *anime* and *manga*, and music, particularly among younger generations in the US and abroad.

This course examines the significant socio-historical and political meanings that mass/popular culture—in this case, pop culture materials originating from or related to Japan—have in our everyday lives in personal, local and global contexts. This year, in particular, due to the massive earthquake in the Tohoku region and resulting accident at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, I will use quite a few contents reflecting the past and ongoing politics of nuclear power in Japan. Students will be able to learn the approaches and skills to critically interpret and analyze a variety of pop culture media, and learn how to connect academic approaches to popular culture to students’ everyday life experiences. We will also discuss how various cultural practices have the potential to cause social change. Thematic topics to be explored include *manga*, *anime*, music, performance arts, fashion, the internet, games and toys, television, etc.

No knowledge of Japanese is required. The class is targeted especially for Japan Studies as well as Social and Cultural Anthropology majors and minors, although others interested in the topic are also welcome to take the course.

II. Format and Procedures:

I envision this class to be a combination of lecture and seminar involving active classroom discussion based on close reading of the assigned texts. I may deliver occasional lectures on history, society and culture in Japan when necessary. Your active participation is extremely important for your success in this course.

This is a multi-media course, with many in-class showings of films, videos and images. Regular attendance and participation in class are required. Active and thoughtful participation in discussion will be rewarded.

III. Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation policy:

Attendance is required. Active participation in Discussion Board on D2L will be rewarded in your final participation grade.

2. Required Readings:

Books for Purchase:

- Ian Condry. *Hip-hop Japan*
- Tsusui, William. *Godzilla on My Mind*
- Tezuka, Osamu. *Phoenix Vol.2*
- *Bakuman vol 1 and 2*
- Yoshinaga, Fumi. *Ooku: The Inner Chambers*, Vol. 1

Recommended:

- Kio, Shimoku. *Genshiken: The Society for the Study of Modern Visual Culture, Volumes 1&5*

Articles can be downloaded from Desire2Learn (D2L).

3. Grading:

Class participation and attendance: 50 points

Exercises: 10 points

D2L Participation (Weekly discussion questions; personal essay; film reactions) 60 points

Presentation: 60 points

Two Short Papers (on Godzilla and Taiko): 140 points (70 points each)

Doujinshi Project: 80 points

Final Project (8-10 pages): 100 points

Total: 500 Points

Weekly Discussion Questions:

Formulate one question on the week's readings, and post it by 10 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays on the appropriate discussion board on D2L. (You are, of course, welcome and encouraged to comment on each other's questions and comments, and reflect on the class discussion in the same space.)

Personal Essay on Japanese Popular Culture and You: Write a one-page personal account on your own experiences (or lack of experiences) with Japanese popular culture. Post it onto the appropriate discussion board on D2L.

Short Paper Projects:

Paper 1: Godzilla paper

Paper 2: ethnographic paper based on Montana Taiko field trip

The instruction will be given later in the course.

Presentation:

Choose one of the topics covered in this class, and sign up on the D2L discussion board. Do a 20-minute group presentation on the assigned date, conducting some additional research on the topic. After your presentation, lead classroom discussion for 10-15 minutes.

Dojinshi Project:

Create a “*dojinshi*” (something like a zine - to be explained in class) as a group project.

Final Paper:

Write an 8-10 page paper on an issue relating to Japanese popular culture that emerged out of this class (e.g. popular culture and social change, globalization of popular culture.) Please integrate the knowledge you gained through the readings, discussions, internet resources, media viewings, fieldtrips, as well as your additional research for the paper. If you would like to produce a poster or a video instead, please consult with me.

Film Showing

There will be occasional film showings outside of class (likely on Thursday evenings), so that I can show some feature-length films which is difficult to show in classes. I will make an announcement on the film showing schedule once it is set. Viewing of the films are required.

Writing:

Writing is an integral part of this class, and in the discipline of anthropology. The quality of writing will be taken account for the evaluation of your papers. If you have trouble in writing, please visit Writing Center so that you can submit good quality writing for your assignments.

D2L:

I will use internet resources a lot in this class, especially D2L, to make announcements, post relevant information, and facilitate discussion. Make sure you check the D2L site every day during the semester.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is illegal. Even if you are borrowing someone else’s idea and putting in into your own words, you are required to cite that source.

Visit http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_citation.html, if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism or other forms of inappropriate academic conduct. Also see the site that describes the University’s procedures for handling such cases:

http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/cg400.html

Plagiarized essays (or segments thereof) will receive an “F” (0% credit) for the entire assignment and, if the offense is judged by the anthropology faculty to be intentional, the student may be sent to the academic review board. The MSU academic review board has the power to suspend or expel a student who is found guilty of plagiarism.

Note: I may alter parts of this syllabus as the term progresses. In order to keep up with the changes, please visit D2L frequently to get announcements.

IV. Course Schedule

NOTE: Due to the schedule arrangement with the Montana Taiko Group and other guest speakers, it is likely that I may change the schedule in the middle of the semester to accommodate the guest speaker's visit to class and our fieldtrip to the group's practice session. Please pay close attention to D2L re. schedule changes.

Jan 12 Introduction to the course
Why should we focus on Japanese popular culture?

Due on Jan 16 - Personal Essay on Japanese Popular Culture and You (2-3 paragraphs or more; post onto D2L discussion board); Please also post your discussion question, based on Yoshimi article (and The Japanese Version film if possible), onto Discussion Board by 10pm.

Jan 17
“America” in Japan, and since then?

Film: *The Japanese Version*

- Yoshimi, Shunya, “Consuming America, Producing Japan” *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West*, Cornell University Press, 2006

Jan 19, 24

Globalization of “Cool Japan”?: Pokemon, computer games and toys

Guest speaker?

- Ann Allison Selections from *Millenium Monsters*.

Students’ Presentation #1 on Games and Toys

Exercise: visit a toy store and/or a bookstore, take fieldnotes on how Japanese pop culture materials are sold. Due on Sep 8.

Jan 26, 31, Feb 2

Godzilla, Monsters and Nuclear Politics

Films: *Godzilla* original Japanese version and the Hollywood version

- Reading: Tsutsui *Godzillas on My Mind*

Presentation #2 on Popular Films and TV

Godzilla paper due on Feb 5 at 10pm (D2L Dropbox)

Feb 7, 9, 14

Manga

History of Manga

- Kinsella, Sharon. *Adult Manga*, Chapter 1 (D2L)
- *Sazae-san*

Manga, Society and Nuclear Politics

- *Doraemon, Astroboy* (D2L)
- Tezuka, Osamu. *Phoenix Vol2*
- *Coppelion* (D2L)

Manga and Gender

- Yoshinaga, Fumi. *Ooku: The Inner Chambers* Vol. 1
- Schodt, “Flowers and Dreams” in *Manga! Manga!* (D2L)
- Jones, Gretchen. “Bad Girls Like to Watch: Writing and Reading Ladies’ Comics” in Laura Miller and Jan Bardsley eds. *Bad Girls of Japan*, Palgrave, 2005 (D2L)

Manga Industry

- *Bakuman* Vol 1 and 2
- Kinsella Chap 2

Presentation #3 on Manga

Feb 16, 21, 23

Anime

- Napier, Selections from *Anime from Akira to Howl’s Moving Castle* (D2L)
- Viewing: *Evangelion* and *Summer Wars*

Presentation #4 on Anime

Feb 28, Mar 1, 6

Otaku and Fans

- Kinsella, Sharon. *Adult Manga*, Chapter 4 (D2L)
- Azuma, Hiroki. *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals*.
- Selections from Saito, Tamaki. *Beautiful Fighting Girl*.
- Thorn, Matthew. “Girls and Women Getting Out of Hand: The Pleasure and Politics of Japan’s Amateur Comics Community.” In William Kelly ed. *Fanning the Flames*.
- Recommended: Kio, Shimoku. *Genshiken*, Vol 1 & Vol. 5

Film: *Otaku Unite!*

Presentation #5 on fandom and otaku culture

Mar 8 – Guest Speaker: Emi Koyama

Spring Break

Mar 20, 22, 27

Popular Music and “Authenticity”: Hip Hop and Taiko Drumming

- Condry, Ian. *Hip-Hop Japan*
- Atkins, Taylor. “Can Japanese Sing the Blues?” *Japan Pop!*
- Hosokawa, Shuhei. “Popular Entertainment and the Music Industry” in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan*. (D2L)
- K pop, J Pop, etc.

***Students’ Presentation #6 on popular music
Montana Taiko Field Trip***

Mar 29, April 3

The Internet: Possibilities and Violence

- Imai Noriaki profile and interview on BBC News (D2L)
- Imai Noriaki articles (D2L)
- 2channel excerpts (D2L)
- 4chan (D2L)
- Sansteen, Cass. Selections from *Republic.com* (D2L)
- Nakano, Hitori. *Train Man* (D2L)

- Film: *Train Man*

Presentation #7 on the internet culture

April 5, 10

Sports

- Edwards, Elise. Women’s World Cup (D2L)
- Kelly, William. From Fanning the Flame. (D2L)

- Film: *Gaea Girls*

April 12 – Dojinshi Project Due Presentation and in-class voting

April 17 and 19

Body, Beauty and Fashion

- Selections from Miller, Laura. *Beauty Up* (D2L)
- Robertson, Jennifer. “Gendering Robots” in Fruhstuck and Walthall eds. *Recreating Japanese Men*.
- Other articles TBD
- *Video*: selection from *America’s Next Top Model, season 3*

Students’ presentation #8 on Sports, beauty and fashion

April 24 and 26

Final Project Presentations

Final Project due on April 27 at 10pm on D2L