

HUMA2203

JAPANESE CINEMA

Fall 2024

Thursday 10:00-11:50 (Room 2465)

Friday 12:30-13:20 (Room 2306)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Baryon Tensor Posadas

Room 2355

Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course takes as its object of analysis the themes, stylistics, and genres of Japanese cinema through work of classic directors (Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, and Ozu) and more recent filmmakers. Initially we will focus our attention on how to analyze film form and style. With this as our starting point, we will then proceed to unpack how issues of film form and style have been taken up and transformed in the history of Japanese cinema. Our discussions will cover such issues as the rise of the “pure film” movement in the early twentieth century, the impact of the postwar relationship between Hollywood and the Japanese film industry on the development of the discipline of film studies, the conceptual complications posed by other visual forms such as television and animation, and the globalization of Japanese cinema. At the heart of the course will be the question of how “Japanese cinema” as both an object and category of analysis both consolidates and pulls apart our understanding of the boundaries of both “Japan” and “cinema.” By the end of the term, students are expected to gain a familiarity with the history, culture, and politics that underpin the development of Japanese cinema from the early twentieth century to the present as well as the language and ability to perform formal and stylistic analyses of films.

In this course students will consider the ways in which Japanese culture presents community in film and how it relates to their own community; students will analyze important social, political, and environmental issues that are raised in Japanese film and consider them in a broader global historical context, and upon completion of the course, students will be able to use their new skills in film and media interpretation to analyze and consider media in their everyday world.

COURSE GOALS

Upon completion of this course students will have

- Explain the primary 20th and 21st century cultural concerns in Japan as depicted in cinema
- Perform formal and stylistic analyses of films to become an active rather than passive viewer of cinema
- Describe the impact of the global flows of cinematic production and circulation on the development of Japanese cinema
- Identify important directors and important film movements within Japan
- Describe the technical development of film, from silent cinema to digital media, from the beginning of the 20th century to the present

CLASS FORMAT

In an effort to facilitate the active engagement of all in our discussions in class, for the second half, we will make use of a quasi-seminar format. However, in light of the size of our class, a seminar

involving everyone at once would be rather unwieldy. For this reason, what we will do is divide the class into six groups. Beginning in Week 8 (the week of March 13, on the Wednesday session of each week, we will have a different group of 7-9 students sit in front of the class with the instructor and conduct a discussion, with the rest of the class occupying their usual seats. For the first part of session, the class is conducted as if it were small seminar, with the students engaging in a discussion of the assigned texts. The final 30 minutes the class can then be devoted to addressing questions coming from the floor, which can be addressed to both the instructor and the students participating in the seminar. Every week, a different set of students sit in front, with every student doing so once during the course of the semester.

During the first two weeks of class, students are asked to sign up as a seminar participant for one of the sessions in the second part of term (between Week 8 and 14). Students may sign up for any session of their choosing, as long as space remains in the group.

COURSE EVALUATION

Attendance and participation	20%
First paper	20%
Seminar session	10%
Critical Reflection (1-page)	10%
Session Review (1-page)	10%
Final paper (6-8 pages)	30%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance to class sessions and active participation in the discussions (both in class and alternatively on the course website discussion board) is mandatory. Please come to class prepared to critically discuss both the films and the critical materials assigned for that session. Performance during the session in which you are seminar participant will also be evaluated separate from this category.

First paper

For the first paper, your task is to produce a formal analysis of a film in line with one of several possible questions. Using the critical and theoretical readings, as well as our discussions in class to date as your point of departure, you will be asked identify key formal features that appear in the clip, and relate these to the most pressing problems at stake in the relationship between film form and the Japanese history and stake out your own critical position vis-à-vis these concerns.

(Due March 13)

Late submissions will be subject to a deduction of 2% per day

Critical Reflection

On the week wherein you are scheduled to participate in the discussion seminar, you are required submit a 1-page response on the Monday before the session in question. In these responses, you are tasked to examine on one or more of the assigned theoretical readings. These reflections should go beyond mere summaries of the texts; instead, they should raise questions for discussion, highlight important critical points, and demonstrate a grasp of the key issues at hand. The format is fairly informal and flexible, and can consist of (for example) the articulation of a set of questions, or a staging of a debate between two or more readings, or a discussion of the relationship between the critical material and the film up for discussion on that week. The purpose of these responses is to facilitate our subsequent discussions in class by serving as signposts and terms of reference.

Session Review

You are also required to submit a 1-page review of one of the discussion seminars other than the one in which you participate. In these responses, students are expected to critically reflect on the assigned readings and the subsequent discussion that ensues in class. As with the responses above, these reflections should go beyond mere summaries of the texts; instead, they should build upon the preceding discussions by raising further questions and inquiries or by highlighting relevant related critical issues. You are encouraged to make use of these reviews as a space to articulate your own particular interests in relation to the course material and topics of discussion at hand. Submission is due one week following the session reviewed. No late reviews will be accepted.

Final Paper

Using one or more films as a focal point, produce a solid original analysis of one of several possible selected critical issues arising from how the text in question illuminates and is informed by questions of film form, cinema and new media, or nationality and transnationality. Final papers should be between 6-8 pages in length, and should be rigorously documented and well-organized. While students are expected to make use of the relevant theoretical and critical materials covered in class, the specific focus of the paper is for the student to determine.

(Due May 1)

Late papers will be subject to a 2% penalty per day.

REQUIRED READINGS

Yale Film Studies: Film Analysis Website 2.0. <http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/index.htm>

All other readings will be made available on the course website.

SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 Introduction to the Course

Sep 5 Orientation

Sep 6 Aaron Gerow, "Nation, Citizenship, Cinema." In Jennifer Robertson, ed. *A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan* (Wiley, 2008).

Week 2 Key Issues in Japanese Film Studies

Sep 12 Adrian Martin. "What's Happening? Story, Scene and Sound in Hou Hsiao-Hsien." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (June 2008): 258-70.

Café Lumiere (Kōhi jikō, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 2003)

Sep 13 Aaron Gerow, "Introduction." In *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). 1-39.

A Page of Madness (*Kurutta ichipeiji*, Kinugasa Teinosuke, 1926)

Week 3 Mizoguchi: Cinematic Form and History

Sep 19 Chika Kinoshita. "The Benshi Track: Mizoguchi Kenji's *The Downfall of Osen* and the Sound Transition." *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 3 (2011): 1-25.

Sisters of Gion (*Gion no shimai*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1936)

Sep 20 Jessica Langer, "Searching for a Third Way: Mizoguchi Kenji's *Sisters of the Gion* and Kamei Fumio's Shanghai as Responses to Early- to Mid-20th Century Japanese Imperialism," *Asian Cinema* 16, no. 2 (September 1, 2005): 221-228.

Week 4 Kurosawa and Subjectivity

Sep 26 Rachel Hutchinson. "Orientalism or Occidentalism? Dynamics of Appropriation in Akira Kurosawa." In *Remapping World Cinema*, edited by Song Hwee Lim and Stephanie Dennison. Wallflower Press, 2006.

Rashōmon (Kurosawa Akira, 1950)

Sep 27 Nick Redfern. "Film Style and Narration in *Rashomon*." *Journal of Japanese & Korean Cinema* 5, no. 1/2 (January 2014): 21-36.

Week 5 Ozu as Anti-Hollywood Filmmaker

Oct 3 Noel Burch, "Ozu Yasujiro," from *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (University of California, 1979), 154-185.

Late Spring (*Banshun*, Ozu Yasujiro, 1949).

Oct 4 Michael Pigott. "The Continuous Present in Ozu Yasujiro's *Late Spring*." *KronoScope* 8, no. 1 (April 2008): 13-28.

Week 6

Oct 10 Midterm Exam

Week 7 Cinema and the Politics of the Image

Oct 17 Yuriko Furuhashi, "Cinema, Event, Artifactuality." In *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Duke University Press, 2013).

Death by Hanging (*Kōshikei*, Ōshima Nagisa, 1968).

Oct 18 Ogawa, Shota T. "Reinhabiting the Mock-up Gallows: The Place of Koreans in Oshima Nagisa's Films in the 1960s." *Screen* 56, no. 3 (September 2015): 303-18.

Week 8 Meta-cinematic Memory

Oct 24 Harry D. Harootunian, "Japan's Long Postwar: The Trick of Memory and the Ruse of History," in *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present*, ed. Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 98-121.

Afterlife (Wandaafuru Raifu, Koreeda Hirokazu, 1999).

Oct 25 Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano. "Capturing 'Authenticity': Digital Aesthetics in the Post-Studio Japanese Cinema." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 18.1 (Spring 2009): 71-93.

Week 9 Transnational Japan

Oct 31 Koichi Iwabuchi, "Nostalgia for a (Different) Asian Modernity: Media Consumption of 'Asia' in Japan," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10, no. 3 (2002): 547-73.

Swallowtail (Suwarouteiru, Iwai Shunji, 1996)

Nov 1 Mika Ko, "Cosmetic Multiculturalism and Contemporary Japanese Cinema." *Japanese Cinema and Otherness: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Japaneseness* (Routledge, 2013).

Week 10 Everydayness and the End of the World

Nov 7 Miyadai Shinji, "Transformation of Semantics in the History of Japanese Subcultures since 1992." *Mechademia* 6, no. 1 (2011): 231-58.

Battle Royale (Batoru royaru, Fukusaku Kinji, 1999)

Nov 8 Arai, Andrea G. "Killing Kids: Recession and Survival in Twenty-First-Century Japan." *Postcolonial Studies* 6, no. 3 (2003): 367-79.

Week 10 J-Horror and Globalization

Nov 14 Bliss Cua Lim, "The Ghostliness of Genre: Global Hollywood Remakes the Asian Horror Film." In *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 190-244.

Pulse (Kairo, Kurosawa Kiyoshi, 2001)

Nov 15 Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, "J-Horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema." In Jinhee Choi and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, eds. *Horror to the*

Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema (Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 15-38.

Week 12 Genre Excess

Nov 21 Williams, Linda. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess." *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 2-13.

Memories of Matsuko (Kiraware Matsuko no Isshō, Nakashima Tetsuya, 2006)

Nov 22 Berlant, Lauren. —. "Genre Flailing." *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.22387/CAP2018.16>

Week 13 Rebuild of Japan

Nov 28 Lamarre, Thomas. "Fukushima and the Rebuild of Godzilla: Multiplying Media in an Era of Multiplying Disaster." In *Toxic Immanence*, edited by Livia Monnet, 94-126. *Decolonizing Nuclear Legacies and Futures*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022.

Shin-Godzilla (Shin-Gojira, Anno Hideaki, 2016)

Nov 29 Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "Questions of Japanese Cinema: Disciplinary Boundaries and the Invention of the Scholarly Object," in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 368-402.

COURSE POLICIES

Grading Policy

In this course, numeric percentile grades will be converted to letter grades using the following standard:

A+	97-100	Excellent Performance
A	93-96	
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good Performance
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Satisfactory Performance
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D	60-69	Marginal Pass
F	0-59	Fail

Academic Integrity

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology is a community designed for scholarship - for teaching, learning, and research. Academic integrity and honesty are critical values in upholding HKUST's reputation as a community of scholars and its claim to the "intellectual property" created by staff and students. All students who join HKUST are therefore committed to an [Academic Honor Code](#).

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course.

Special Educational Needs

The University takes a proactive role in ensuring and cultivating a positive learning environment for students, where equal opportunities in academic and non-academic pursuits for each student are guaranteed.

The SEN Support under the Counseling and Wellness Center provides a wide range of support services and resources to ensure that all students have equality of opportunity, that they benefit equally from university life, and to cultivate a campus culture of inclusion.

If a student is diagnosed or suspects his/her difficulties are related to any type of SEN, he or she is strongly advised to self-identify and provide recent documentation of his or her SEN to SEN Support. Reasonable accommodations or adjustments will be worked out amongst student, instructor(s) and SEN Support. If SEN Support is not aware of a student's needs, please contact sen@ust.hk to arrange a confidential discussion. All information is handled in the strictest confidence.