

HUMA2202

THE MODERN JAPANESE NOVEL

Spring 2025

Tuesdays/Thursdays, 9:00 – 11:20 pm

Room 2407, Lift 17-18

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Baryon Tensor Posadas

Room 2355

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is about the origins and subsequent historical development of the modern novel as a literary form in Japan, covering the period between the end of the nineteenth century until the Second World War. Paying attention to the social forces that gave way to the novel's rise and its subsequent transformations, discussions in class will revolve around the question of how particular literary forms and genres constitute their readers to mediate the historical experience of Japanese modernization. Through the examination of these fictions—attentive not only to the stories they tell and the images and tropes they deploy, but also to modes of reading and the structuring of desires, affects, and horizons of expectation that their narrative forms engender—we will track the transformations in the historical unconscious of literary narration.

Every week, we will discuss one novel by a Japanese author. Interspersed between these sessions will be discussions that cover a range of critical materials to provide a historical and critical framework for working through these literary fictions. Topics of discussion will include: the relationship between the narrative form of the novel and the imagination of the nation-state, gender and literary genre, the fragmentation of narrative in modernist writings, the demarcation between “pure” and “mass” literature, and the role of translation in constructing conceptions of “Japanese literature.” In the course of our conversations, participants will be expected not only to gain a familiarity with the literary history of modern Japan, but more importantly, to be able to articulate the social and political forces shaping the very construction of this national literary history.

As all the texts will be made available in English translation, no prior Japanese language proficiency is required.

By the end of the course, students are expected to have completed the following learning outcomes:

1. Recognize with the historical circumstances that led to the processes of literary modernization in Japan and its subsequent developments
2. Recall and explain the mechanics of modern literary language and narration
3. Apply the fundamentals of literary criticism through one's own analysis and interpretation
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the perspective of the major authors of 20th century Japanese literature

CLASS FORMAT

To facilitate the active engagement of all in our discussions in class, from Week 5 onwards, we will make use of a quasi-seminar discussion format for the weeks in which we cover each of the assigned novels. We will divide the class into five groups. Beginning in Week 3, on the Monday session, we will have a different group of students conduct a live discussion in front of the rest of the class. On these days, the class will be conducted as if it were small seminar, with the students engaging in a sustained discussion of the assigned material. Every week, a different set of students will participate in the seminar session, with every student doing so once during the semester.

During the first week of class, students are asked to sign up as a seminar participant for one of the sessions (between Weeks 5 and 14). Students may sign up for any session of their choosing.

COURSE EVALUATION

Attendance and participation	20%
Seminar session	10%
Critical reflection	10%
Session review	10%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	25%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is mandatory and active participation in the discussions is expected. Please come to the class sessions having already read both the literary texts and the critical materials assigned for that session and be prepared to critically discuss them in class.

Midterm Exam

For the midterm exam, your task is to produce an analysis of the historical emergence and development of the modern novel in Japan in response to one of several possible questions. Using the critical and theoretical readings as your point of departure, you will be asked to discuss key issues in Japanese literary modernization, including such topics as the print capitalism and nationalism, the standardization of literary languages and forms, or the historical conditions of the rise of the I-novel,

(March 10)

Critical Reflections

On the week wherein you are scheduled to participate in the seminar, you are required submit a 1-2 page (single-spaced) response one day before the session in question (due Sunday evening before midnight). In these critical reflections, students are asked to identify a key passage from the assigned readings and articulate its significance in relation to the novel to be discussed that week. The purpose of these responses is to facilitate our subsequent discussions in class by serving as signposts and frames of reference.

(Due one day before the assigned Monday seminar session)

No late critical reflections will be accepted.

Session Reviews

In addition to the critical reflection, students are also required to submit one 1-2 page (single-spaced) review of a discussion seminar other than the one in which you participate. In these reviews, students will provide a brief summary of the key points raised in the discussion, followed by further commentary and an articulation of their own perspectives on the topics at hand. As with the critical reflections above, these reviews should go beyond mere summaries to instead build upon the preceding discussions by raising further questions and inquiries or by highlighting relevant related critical issues. Students are free to choose which seminar sessions they wish to write their review on.

(Due one week after the seminar session reviewed)

No late session reviews will be accepted.

Final Exam

Similar to the midterm exam, for the final exam, students will be asked to select one question among a range of possible critical issues arising from the aesthetics of Japanese literary modernism and the historical milieu in which these texts emerge. Topics of discussion can include such issues as gender and flânerie, modernism and imperialism, the interface between film and literature, etc.

(May 7)

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Natsume Sôseki, *Sanshiro*. 1907. Trans. Jay Rubin. Penguin Classics, 2010.
- Tanizaki Jun'ichirô, *Chijin no ai*. 1924. *Naomi*. Trans. Anthony Chambers. Knopf, 1985.
- Edogawa Ramapo, *Injû*. 1928. *The Black Lizard and the Beast in the Shadows*. Trans.: Ian Hughes. Kurodahan Press, 2006
- Kawabata Yasunari, *Asakusa kurenaidan*. 1930. *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*. Trans.: Alisa Freedman. University of California Press, 2005.
- Yokomitsu Riichi, *Shanghai*. 1928. Trans. Dennis Washburn. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001

All other materials listed below will be made available through the course website on Canvas.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction

Feb 3 Orientation

Feb 5 Culler, Jonathan. "What is Literature and Does it Matter?" *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2000. 19-42.

Anderson, Benedict. "Introduction" and "Cultural Roots." *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983. 1-36.

Week 2 Origins of Modern Literature

Feb 10 Suzuki, Tomi. "The Position of the Shôsetsu: Paradigm Change and New Literary Discourse." *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity*. Stanford University Press, 1997. 15-32.

Maeda Ai. "Modern Literature and the World of Printing." In *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*. Ed. James A. Fujii. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. 255-272.

Feb 12 Excerpt from Tsubouchi Shoyo's "The Essence of the Novel." Donald Keene, ed. *Modern Japanese Literature*. Grove Press, 1956. 55-58.

Ueda, Atsuko. "The Genealogy of the Shôsetsu: from *Gesaku* to 'shôsetsu=novel'." *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment: The Production of "Literature" in Meiji Japan*. Stanford University Press, 2007. 28-57.

Week 3 Literary Modernization in Japan

Feb 17 Mori Ôgai, "Maihime: The Dancing Girl." Richard Bowring, trans. J. Thomas Rimer, ed. *Youth and Other Stories*. University of Hawaii Press, 1994. 6-24.

Hill, Christopher. "Mori Ôgai's Resentful Narrator: Trauma and the National Subject in the 'Dancing Girl'." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, no. 2 (2002): 365-397.

Feb 19 Maeda Ai. "Berlin 1888: Mori Ôgai's 'Dancing Girl.'" Trans. Leslie Pincus. In *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*. Ed. James A. Fujii. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. 295-328.

Week 4 Interiority and the I-novel

Feb 24 Tayama Katai. "The Quilt." Kenneth G. Henshall, trans. *The Quilt and Other Stories*. Columbia University Press, 1981.

Suzuki, Tomi. "The Furor over the I-Novel: The Question of Authenticity." *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity*. Stanford University Press, 1997. 48-65.

Feb 26 Tayama Katai. "Girl Watcher." Kenneth G. Henshall, trans. *The Quilt and Other Stories*. Columbia University Press, 1981.

Fujii, James "Intimate Alienation: Japanese Urban Rail and the Commodification of Urban Subjects." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11:2 (Summer 1999): 106-133

Week 5 Railways and Urban Space

Mar 3 Natsume Sōseki, *Sanshiro*

Freedman, Alisa. *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road*. Stanford University Press, 2011. 68-115.

Mar 5 Natsume Sōseki, *Sanshiro* (cont.)

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. "Panoramic Travel." *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*. University of California Press, 1986, 52-69.

Week 6 Fragmented Identities, Fragmented Narratives

Mar 10 MIDTERM EXAM

Mar 12 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. "Spinning Gears." *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*. Penguin, 2006. 206-236.

Lippit, Seiji M. "Introduction: Fissures of Japanese Modernity." *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*. Columbia University Press, 2002. 1-36.

Week 7 The Modern Girl and the Movies

Mar 17 Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. *Naomi*.

Silverberg, Miriam. "The Modern Girl as Militant (Movement on the Streets)." *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*. University of California Press, 2006. 51-72.

Mar 19 Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. *Naomi*. (cont.)

Shamoon, Deborah. "The Modern Girl and the Vamp: Hollywood Film in Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's Early Novels." *Positions* 20, no. 4 (September 21, 2012): 1067-93.

Week 8 Cinema and Identity

Mar 24 Satō Haruo. "Fingerprint." Trans. Francis Tenny. *Beautiful Town: Stories and Essays by Sato Haruo*. University of Hawaii Press, 1996. 64-105.

Tom Gunning, "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema" in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, ed. University of California Press, 1996, 15-45.

Mar 26 Edogawa Rampo, *The Beast in the Shadows*

Tzvetan Todorov "The Typology of Detective Fiction," *Modern Criticism and Theory: a Reader*. Ed. David Lodge. (London: Longman, 1988), 157-65.

Week 9 Detective Fiction as Social Critique

Mar 31 Edogawa Rampo, *The Beast in the Shadows* (cont.)

Kawana, Sari. "Eyeing the Privates: Sexuality as Motive." *Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 69-110.

Apr 2 NO CLASS

Week 10 The Traffic of Gazes in Urban Space

Apr 7 Hori Tatsuo. "Aquarium" In Angela Yiu, ed. *Three-Dimensional Reading: Stories of Time and Space in Japanese Modernist Fiction, 1911-1932*. University of Hawaii Press, 2013. 109-122.

Anke Gleber. "Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity: In Search of the Female Flâneur." In *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flânerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. 171-189, and 254-258.

Apr 9 Ozaki Midori, "Osmanthus." *Manoa* 3, no. 2 (October 1, 1991): 187-90.

Anne Friedberg, "The Mobilized and the Virtual Gaze." *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. 11-38.

Week 11 Urban Ethnography and the Erotic Grotesque

Apr 14 Kawabata Yasunari, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*.

Arthur Mitchell. "Kawabata Yasunari's *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* and the Narrative of the Present." *Disruptions of Daily Life: Japanese Literary Modernism in the World*. Ithaca (N.Y.): Cornell East Asia Series, 2020. 154-191.

Apr 16 Kawabata Yasunari, *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*. (cont.)

Silverberg, Miriam. "Japanese Modern Within Modernity." *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006. 13-47.

Week 12 The Problem of "Women's Literature"

Apr 21 NO CLASS

Apr 23 Ericson, Joan. "The Origins of the Concept of Women's Literature." Paul Gordon in Schalow

and Janet A. Walker, eds. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*. Stanford University Press, 1996. 74-115.

Hayashi Fumiko, "Diary of a Vagabond." Trans. Joan Ericson. In *Be a Woman: Hayashi Fumiko and Modern Japanese Women's Literature*. University of Hawaii Press. 1997. 123-220.

Week 13 Imperial Circulation of Bodies

Apr 28 Yokomitsu Riichi, *Shanghai*.

Seiji Lippit. "Topographies of Empire: Yokomitsu Riichi's *Shanghai*." *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*. New York, NY: Columbia UP, 2002. 73-115.

Apr 30 Yokomitsu Riichi, *Shanghai*. (cont.)

Jameson, Fredric. "Modernism and Imperialism." In *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, 43-68. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Week 14 Wrap-up

May 7 FINAL EXAM

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](#).

Course AI Policy

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

Communication and Feedback

Under normal circumstances, assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

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.