

**HUMA 5451**

## **IMAGES OF JAPAN**

Fall 2023

Tuesdays, 12:00 – 2:50 pm

Rm 5566, Lift 27-28

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

Baryon Tensor Posadas

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course takes up the visual and textual practices through which an imagined Japan has been constructed across history as a point of departure for interrogating the premises and practices of cross-cultural analysis more broadly. In examining non-Japanese texts' representations of Japan, the challenge in this course is not simply to determine the accuracy or authenticity of the various texts' respective representations, but to ask what is at stake in the deployment of "Japan" as an imagined geography. With these discussions as our point of departure, we will consider the critical and theoretical issues foregrounded by acts of looking, writing, and interpreting "Japan" to reflect on our own intellectual positions vis-a-vis acts of representing "the foreign."

Particular emphasis will be placed on such focal points as: ethnographic cinema, the politics of travel and translation, the intersecting performances of race and gender, the uses of cultural otherness in the writing of alternate histories, and the ramifications of techno-orientalist discourse. We will consider such questions as: How do the texts in question call attention the political-economic conditions that have shaped representations of Japan at given historical conjunctures? How does the problem of gender and its intersections with discourses on race, ethnicity, or the nation complicate how we might apprehend the mechanisms through which "Japan" is imagined in fiction? How does the idea of "Japan" play out in different forms of representation, for example, filmic vs. literary representation? How might we account for the possibility of auto-orientalisms in Japanese cultural productions?

No preceding knowledge of Japanese language, literature, or history is required. All the required readings are available in English, and discussions are conducted in English.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Articulate key issues in cross-cultural analysis vis-à-vis Japan and beyond.
- Produce textual analyses of films and fictions with particular attention to how texts' formal devices, narrative strategies, and patterns of focalization mediate their practices of cross-cultural representation.
- Identify broader patterns of representation in works of film and fiction that take up Japan (and Asia) as their object of interest.
- Produce their own written critiques of texts that engage in cross-cultural representation.
- Familiarize themselves with professional academic practices for communicating their work orally to an audience.

### **COURSE EVALUATION**

Attendance and participation	20%
Discussion board	10%
Midterm paper	20%
Conference paper	25%
Final paper	25%

### **Attendance and Participation**

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

### **Discussion board postings**

Every week, students are required to electronically circulate a short response to be posted on the discussion board of the course website. In these responses, students are asked to identify key concepts and arguments from the one or more of the assigned readings and use these as a point of departure to formulate a discussion question, with the goal of provoking further conversation in mind. These should go beyond simple factual questions to instead raise open-ended issues that get at the larger critical context of the reading's discussion, the stakes of its claims and contentions, potential implications and applications, etc.

(Due every week, from week 2 to week 11, 5 in total)

### **Midterm Paper**

As a midterm assignment, students are required to submit a critical reflection of about 4 pages in length. For this assignment, your task is to critically reflect on the issues and political complications in writing, looking, or thinking about "Japan" that we have discussed thus far. With the critical and theoretical readings, as well as our discussions in class to date as your point of departure, identify what you believe to be the most pressing problems at stake in taking up "Japan" as an object of study and articulate a position for yourself vis-a-vis these issues.

(Due Oct 10)

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

### **Conference Paper**

In the final weeks of the semester, each student will present a conference paper based on their own research project while at once reflecting on the issues and challenges raised in the discussions throughout the semester. Presentations should be about 20 minutes in length (approximately 2000 words). Following the presentation, the class will be conducted as a public workshop wherein participants raise questions, discuss the issues raised, and offer comments and suggestions to the presenter. The topic and content of the conference paper will form the basis of the final paper, discussed in greater detail below.

(Due Nov 21)

### **Final Paper**

Using one or more literary texts (or films, or animations) as a focal point, produce a solid analysis of the range critical issues in relation to the ways in which "Japan" is represented in literary and other discourses. Topics can include (but are not restricted to) any of the themes discussed in class, e.g., travelogues and ethnographies, intersections of gender, and nation, ethnic and gender passing, techno-orientalisms and empire, etc. Papers should be organized around a text (literary, filmic, etc.) not previously discussed in the class. While students are expected to make use of the relevant theoretical

and critical materials covered in class, the specific focus of the paper and choice of text is for the student to determine in consultation with the instructor.

The final paper requirement will have two components: the first part will be the submission of an initial draft (2000-2500 words) for presentation in class (due April 21). Following the presentations/workshops, these papers shall be then revised and/or expanded in response to comments and suggestions received.

(Due Dec 12)

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

## REQUIRED TEXTS

### BOOKS

Dick, Philip K. *The Man in the High Castle*. Putnam, 1962.  
Otsuka, Julie, *The Buddha in the Attic*. Anchor, 2012.  
Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Knopf, 1997.  
Ozeki, Ruth L. *My Year of Meats*. Penguin, 1998.  
Sheung-King, *You are Eating an Orange, You are Naked*, 2020

### FILMS

Chris Marker, *Sans Soleil*, 1983  
David Cronenberg, *M. Butterfly*, 1993  
Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, 1959  
Wong Kar Wai, *2046*, 2004  
Pen-Ek Ratanaruang, *Last Life in the Universe*, 2004

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

## SCHEDULE

### Week 1 Historical Signposts: *Orientalism* and Japan

Sep 5 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 1-27

Richard Minear, "Orientalism and the Study of Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 39.3 (1980): 507-517.

Susan J. Napier, "Paths of Power: Japan as Utopia and Dystopia in the Postwar American Imagination," *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West* (Palgrave, 2007), 77-101.

### Week 2 Ethnographic Cinema

Sep 12 Chris Marker, *Sans Soleil*

Dean McCannell, "Staged Authenticity," *The Tourist: A New Theory on the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 91-108.

Alexander, Travis. "A Hint of Industrial Espionage in the Eye: Orientalism, Essayism, and the Politics of Memory in Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 36, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 42–61.

**Week 3 Anthropology and Autobiography**

Sep 19 Arthur Golden, *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

Anne Allison, "Memoirs of the Orient." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 27.2 (2001): 381-398.

Lau, Dorothy W. S. "On (Not) Speaking English: The 'Phonic' Personae of Transnational Chinese Stars in the Global Visual Network." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 12, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 20–40.

**Week 4 Sexuality and Nationality**

Sep 26 David Cronenberg, *M. Butterfly*

Dorinne Kondo, "M. Butterfly: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Critique of Essentialist Identity" in *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater* (Routledge, 1997), pp. 31-54.

Yeh, Catherine Vance. "Politics, Art, and Eroticism: The Female Impersonator as the National Cultural Symbol of Republican China." In *Performing "Nation,"* 205–39. Brill, 2008.

**Week 5 Narrative Performance**

Oct 3 Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*

Ahlin, L. (2015). "All we wanted to do, now that we were back in the world, was forget": On Remembrance and Forgetting in Julie Otsuka's novels. *American Studies in Scandinavia*, 47(2), 81–101.

Munos, Delphine. "We Narration in Chang-Rae Lee's *On Such a Full Sea* and Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic*: 'Unnaturally' Asian American?" *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 66–81.

**Week 6 War, Representation, Desire**

Oct 10 Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*

Maclear, Kyo. "The Limits of Vision: *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and the Subversion of Representation." Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler, eds. *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*. Psychology Press, 2003.

Earl Jackson, Jr. "Desire at Cross(-Cultural) Purposes: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 2.1 (1994): 133-174.

(Midterm paper due)

**Week 7            Alternate Histories**

Oct 17            Philip K. Dick, *The Man in a High Castle*

Cassie Carter, "The Metacolonization of Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*: Mimicry, Parasitism, and Americanism in the PSA," *Science Fiction Studies* 22.3 (Nov 1995): 333-342.

Powell, Zachary Michael. "The Ethics of Alternate History: Melodrama and Political Engagement in Amazon's *The Man in the High Castle*." *South Atlantic Review* 83, no. 3 (2018): 150-69.

**Week 8            From Techno-orientalism to Sinofuturism**

Oct 24            Wong Kar Wai, *2046*

Roh, David S., Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu. "Technologizing Orientalism: An Introduction." In *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media*, 1-19. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

Botz-Bornstein, Thorsten. "Wong Kar-Wai's Films and the Culture of the Kawaii." *SubStance* 37, no. 2 (August 1, 2008): 94-109.

**Week 9            Consuming Images, Consuming Commodities**

Oct 31            Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*.

Phebe Shih Chao, "Gendered Cooking." *Jump Cut* 42 (1998): 19-27.

Cheng, Emily. "Meat and the Millennium: Transnational Politics of Race and Gender in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 12, no. 2 (2009): 191-220.

**Week 10          Japan and Asia**

Nov 7            Pen-Ek Ratanaruang, *Last Life in the Universe*

Ruh, Brian. "Last Life in the Universe: Nationality, Technology, Authorship." Eds. Hunt, Leon, and Leung Wing-Fai. *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film*. I.B.Tauris, 2010. 138-152.

Ciecko, Anne. "Asano Tadanobu and Transnational Stardom: The Paradoxical Polysemy of Cool." In *East Asian Film Stars*, 128-42. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2014.

**Week 11          Diasporic Encounters**

Nov 14 Sheung-King, *You are Eating an Orange, You are Naked*

**Week 12 Workshops**

Nov 21 Presentations/Workshops

**Week 13 Workshops**

Nov 28 Presentations/Workshops