

Webster University

FLST 3160: Topics in Film Studies: Japanese Film

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course focuses on Japanese film from its early days through contemporary films. Noteworthy Japanese directors studied will include: Teinosuki Kinugasa, Yasuhiro Ozu, Kenji Mizoguchi, Akira Kurosawa, Juzo Itami, and Naoto Kumazawa. Class includes lectures, discussions, written analyses, and in-class screenings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this course is to analyze and inform students about Japanese film. By the end of the semester, students should have:

1. An understanding of the basic elements of Japanese film including important cultural concepts expressed cinematically in illustrative selections from noteworthy Japanese directors.
2. An ability to analyze music and sound, editing (montage), performance, camera movement and angle, composition (mise-en-scene), screenwriting and directing and to understand how these technical elements contribute to the Japanese film under scrutiny.
3. An ability to apply various approaches to Japanese film analysis, including consideration of aesthetic elements, sociocultural critiques, and psychoanalytic methodology.
4. An understanding of diverse directorial styles and the effect upon the viewer.
5. An ability to analyze different kinds of Japanese film including historical and escapist, dramatic and comedic examples.
6. Acquaintance with a variety of classic Japanese films, silent and sound, animated and live action.
7. An ability to think critically about responses to Japanese film and to have insight into the films and culture under scrutiny.

We will attempt to do all this through lectures, discussions, readings, and, of course, film screenings.

You will quickly discover is that film is a complex medium. Mastery demands time, thought, energy and discipline. If you like film and apply yourself, this class will be very enjoyable. Still, it is a college-level course that demands that you be conscientious in fulfilling all the requirements listed below.

EVALUATION CATEGORIES: Your grade in this class will depend on the following. If you have any questions or concerns at any time during the semester concerning your work or your grade, please feel free to talk with me during office hours or at any other agreed upon time. Please ask for any help you need in this course.

Course Requirements:

1. Regular, punctual attendance.
2. Class preparation and involvement in all discussions.
3. Completion of all reading assignments.
4. Reading and observation journal on reading assignments and films screened.
5. Two short, out-of-class critical/analytical essays.
6. In-class presentation on one of the Japanese films.
7. Final essay from assigned topics.

1. ATTENDANCE: This is very important. You are expected to attend **ALL** classes and to be here the entire time. Our time is extremely limited and learning is cumulative, so we must take advantage of every class hour. Since this is a screening, lecture and discussion class, you miss experiences that can not be made up when you miss a session for any reason.

Your absences will affect your grade and your progress in film study. You should talk with me as soon as possible if you miss any class. There are **NO** excused absences. When you are not present for any reason, you are absent. Should you miss class, you are responsible for missed work, information and any change in assignments. Call or see me well **BEFORE** the next class period.

If you know you will be absent, let me know in advance. I do not “excuse” absences; you are present or not, but I do consider your keeping in touch a matter of courtesy and effort on your part.

Class begins promptly. If you repeatedly come late to class, I may mark you absent.

2. & 3. CLASS PREPARATION and PARTICIPATION in DISCUSSION: You are expected to complete all the assigned readings **BEFORE** our class for the week. Be sure to ask about anything you don't understand before, during, or after class.

Because we all learn a great deal from each other, you are expected to be attentive to and involved in all discussions. You should listen carefully to the observations and insights of others and offer your own in a spirit of open discussion and investigation. If you are not polite, you will be asked to leave.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: To earn at least a C for the course, you must complete all of the following assignments. Any late work will automatically lose one full grade. Each assignment will be graded on how well it demonstrates your thoughtful insight and informed analysis.

4. READING and OBSERVATION JOURNAL on READING ASSIGNMENTS and FILMS SCREENED. For each of the first seven weeks, you must write at least one page reflecting on the reading assignments and your response to the film for the week. These entries must be analytical not subjective responses. Discuss, for example, what in the reading helped you understand the film or prepared you for the experience. I will collect your journals twice during the semester with your short analytical essays and then with the final essay at the last class session.

5. ANALYTICAL ESSAYS: You must write two short (two-page) papers as a response to the films we study. The topic for each critical/analytical response paper will come directly from our class discussions and readings. At the conclusion of each class I will post these topics on our class web site. You will choose your topic from those posted for the class. These essays will be more directed than your journal writing.

Your out-of-class essays are due: **Week 4: November 15th** and **Week 7: December 6th**
Hand in your journals with your essays.

6. IN-CLASS PRESENTATION: We will divide into five groups of five students each. Each group will have responsibility for introducing one film over the course of our class. Each student will present one aspect of the film, speaking for approximately five minutes. Within the group, each student will address a different aspect of the film as outlined in our course objectives on page 1 of this document. These presentations will prepare the rest of the class for the film under scrutiny for that evening. You must have at least an outline or notes from which to speak. When your presentation is over, you will hand in your notes or the outline.

7. FINAL ESSAY: We will have one final, in-class essay the last class period. You will have a choice of questions that will cover the material for the entire course. You may use your class notes for this final essay.

NOTE: PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. A student who deliberately or unintentionally submits as his or her own work anything which is in any part taken from another person without proper acknowledgement, use of quotation marks, credits, etc., is guilty of plagiarism.

Put very simply, "Writing facts, quotations, or opinions that you got from somebody else without identifying your source: or using someone else's words without putting quotation marks around them" constitutes plagiarism (Silverman, et al., Rules of Thumb 86). **Don't do it.** If you submit any plagiarized work or cheat in any way, I will give you an F for the assignment and an F for the course.

Grade Computation:	Analytical Essays:	30%
	Reading and Observation Journal:	30%
	In-Class Presentation:	20%
	Final Essay:	10%
	Attendance/ Participation:	10%

90-100 = A , 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, Below 60 = F

Controversial Course Content: If you feel that any film we will be studying contains material you find offensive, inform me at least one week ahead of that class period. I will give you an alternative assignment. I will try to alert you to controversial films, but I can not anticipate differences of opinion from all of you. Therefore, it is your responsibility to research the upcoming films if you are concerned about their content. Material on all these films is available in book, articles, and on the web.

Classroom expectations:

1. Listen, take notes, and participate.
2. Bring your course materials to each class meeting. When we discuss a reading or writing assignment, have the materials in front of you on your desk.
3. Turn off cell phones and pagers before coming to class. Put them away and do not use them for the duration of the class period. If I hear a signal, I will ask you to leave and count you absent. Do not send or receive text messages while in class.
4. If you sleep or appear to sleep during class I will ask you to leave and count you absent.
5. No cursing, racist, sexist, or any other kind of insulting comments will be tolerated.
6. Come to class on time and prepare to leave when I direct you. Please do not leave when class is in session. It is distracting and discourteous.
7. Only one person speaks at a time. Please pay attention to the person speaking. Do not engage in private conversations not directed to the class. Unless you have something to say related to the discussion topic or the class, save it until you leave.
8. Do not talk during screenings.

Note: For a variety of reasons, course requirements and assignments may change at any time. Changes will be announced in class, so be on time and pay attention to announcements.

If any of these guidelines or requirements bothers you, please talk it over with me. Again, if you have any questions during the semester concerning your progress or the readings or if you want to make suggestions, feel free to talk with me. I am here to help you learn as much as possible about Japanese film in the time we have. I encourage you to take advantage of any help I may provide to increase your learning.

Eleftheriotis, Dimitris and Gary Needham, ed. *Asian Cinemas: A Reader and Guide*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

McDonald, Keiko. *Mizoguchi*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.

--- *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

Mellon, Joan. *Seven Samurai: Shichinin no samurai*.

---. *Voices from the Japanese Cinema*. New York: Liveright, 1975.

Nolletti, Arthur, Jr., and David Desser, eds. *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Standish, Isolde. *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film*. New York: Continuum, 2005.

Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro. *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

Also on reserve:

Seven Samurai

Tampopo

Tokyo Story

Ugetsu

Yojimbo

Oral Presentation: Approximately 5 minutes

Focus: Insight into the film under scrutiny

Your in-class presentation on the film you've signed up for should last approximately 5 minutes and give us a brief introduction on one specific feature of the film. Don't try to do everything AND coordinate with your fellow presenters.

You should directly address one of our course objectives. Identify what that objective is.

Your presentation should be more than just a listing of facts, though you may start with that. However, always give us something to look for, to analyze in the film, something your thinking and reading about the film has provided you with insight.

The presentation will be graded as follows:

1. Your selection of a specific topic/course objective and
2. your insightful analysis of one aspect of the film under scrutiny. This is most important.

To help in developing your presentation, look again at our course objectives. Think about who the director is and how he fits into the Japanese film study we are pursuing. Think about who the stars are OR what the thematic focus of the film is and what we should pay attention to. You might make comparisons and contrasts to films we've already seen noting some differences or similarities.

I am not grading you on your presentational style, that is, how good a speaker you are. I am grading you on the content and preparation of your presentation.

Remember that this presentation requires directing us with insight, not merely subjective praise or objective facts.

After your presentation, hand in your typed notes—10 points.

You must have at least an outline from which you'll talk so you have organized the details and don't forget specific points.

Feel free to talk with me as your proceed for feedback.