

EAST 364
Mass Culture and Postwar Japan
Fall 2024

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Office hours: TTh 3-4pm

Prerequisites: No prerequisites.

Course Description

This course will explore the media and literature of postwar Japan, starting with the original *Godzilla*. Film director Honda Ishirō's 1954 masterpiece raises fascinating questions of censorship, trauma, and Japan's status as both perpetrator and victim during the Pacific War. We will explore the film through close readings and secondary scholarship, enjoying a brief introduction to the wide world of Godzilla Studies. We will then move on to other texts of the era, including the manga *Astro Boy*, exploitation cinema such as the *Lady Snowblood* series, photography and performance by neo-Imperial author Mishima Yukio (1925-1970), and Metabolist architecture.

We will explore questions like the following: How does the aftermath and trauma of the war manifest in works of art in Japan, including both high art and popular culture? How do writers, filmmakers, and artists, deal with Japan's legacy of imperialism and the surrounding historical amnesia? What does it mean for a society to recover from a traumatic event, and what is lost in that process of recovery? How do writers and artists respond to the everyday structures of postwar life in the aftermath of trauma? Why has the postwar lingered so long in Japan, to the point that contemporary creators are still wrestling with these questions?

Learning Objectives

This course will help support students in critical thinking, reading, and writing skills via the topic of postwar popular culture in Japan.

This course will help students practice their close reading skills of primary sources. We will also practice evaluating arguments in secondary sources and putting them in dialogue.

Course Requirements

Participation 10%
Before-class discussion posts (7): 15%
In-class discussion posts (7): 15%
Midterm Paper (first draft): 25%
Final Paper (revise and resubmit): 35%

For more information about the above requirements, please see the below sections.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Participation: 10%

The participation grade is a holistic letter grade that I generate at the end of the semester. It's based on 1) verbal comments in class, 2) active, respectful listening, and 3) attendance. There is no exact number of absences you need to avoid to get an A, B, C, etc. I have found that it is different for each person.

There isn't a difference between excused and unexcused absences. If you are sick, I strongly encourage you not to come to class to avoid spreading germs. I invite you to keep the lines of communication open via email regarding attendance, but you do not need to share confidential information, medical documentation, or things of that nature.

Another important part of participation is verbal comments in class. How I struggled with this one when I was an undergraduate back in the day! My goal used to be to make one comment or question out loud per class session. This goal was a good way to challenge myself to be more intellectually outgoing and courageous. Think about setting a goal of your own. Take a risk and express your thoughts.

If verbal comments really aren't for you, then you may choose to write extra discussion posts, beyond 7 for each category.

7 before-class discussion posts: 15%

Your response is due the night before class at 10pm. In your response, I suggest you choose a particular quote or excerpt from the material that makes you curious, intrigued, or even a little angry or frustrated. Explain briefly why you chose this excerpt and how it relates to the piece as a whole. Finally, use it as a springboard to pose a question for discussion.

The suggested outline of your post could look like this:

- 1) Quote
- 2) Commentary and Interpretation
- 3) Question

Of course, this outline might not work for everyone or for every post. If you want to take a different approach in one of your discussion posts, then you should go for it!

7 in-class discussion posts: 15%

We will complete in-class writing projects together most sessions. These will vary from session to session based on the material. Maybe we will practice close reading of a primary source, or do some creative work or brain storming.

Midterm Paper (first draft): 25%

length: 750-1250 words (3-5 pages double spaced)
due: Friday Oct. 11

Prompts will be available soon. Please note that you will revisit and build on your midterm for your final paper.

Final Paper (revise and resubmit): 35%

length: 2,000 words (8 pages double spaced) and up
due: Tues. Dec. 10

Your final paper will be a significantly revised and lengthened version of your midterm. More soon!

Books and films

Tezuka, Osamu. *Astro Boy Omnibus*, volume 1. Dark Horse Comics, 2015.

Available at LeJames Bookstore and other outlets.

A few of the films stream commercially and may involve rental fees on websites like YouTube, Prime, etc.

If you cannot access the materials or if purchasing/renting them poses financial hardship, please contact me.

Content Notes

Some of the material we study will include graphic portrayals of sexuality, violence, and other potential triggers. I have tried my best to annotate accordingly throughout the schedule below. If you have particular sensitivities, it might be wise to check out the texts for plot summaries on Wikipedia.

Language Policy

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Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

For this course, representing as one's own idea any thought that was AI-generated may be considered an academic honesty offence. In this class, it is ok to use AI for cosmetic purposes, such as polishing your grammar and spelling. However, the ideas, thoughts, and content of your writing must be your own.

I recommend this video, which shows the film director Miyazaki Hayao of Studio Ghibli as he responds to AI-generated content:
https://youtu.be/ngZOK3lWKRC?si=sCsD_g5bNNHxtrkm. (He says, "I feel strongly that this is an insult to life itself.")

Just in case

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of McGill University, assessment tasks in a course are subject to change, provided students are sent adequate and timely communications regarding the change

Weekly Schedule

Thurs. Aug. 29
Syllabus, introduction

Godzilla Studies

Tues. Sept. 3
Honda, Ishirō, director. *Godzilla (Gojira)*. Toho, 1954. 1 hour 36 minutes. Available on Kanopy through the library: <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1250300873>.

Thurs. Sept. 5

Stevens, Shannon. "The Rhetorical Significance of *Gojira*: Equipment for Living Through Trauma." In *The Atomic Bomb in Japanese Cinema: Critical Essays*. Edited by Matthew Edwards. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2015: 17-32.

Tues. Sept. 10

Yamazaki, Takahashi, director. *Godzilla Minus One*. Toho, 2023. 2 hours 4 minutes. Streaming on Netflix and others.

Thurs. Sept. 12

Harootunian, Harry. "Japan's Long Postwar: The Trick of Memory and the Ruse of History." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, Number 4 (Fall 2000): 715-739.
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/30680>.

Jaworwicz-Zimny, Alexandra and Takayoshi Yamamura. "Shin-Godzilla: Tourism Consuming Images of JSDF, *kaiju* characters, and destroyed sites." In *War as Entertainment and Contents Tourism in Japan*. Edited by Takayoshi Yamamura and Phillip Seaton. New York: Routledge, 2022: 135-139.

Nuclear and Environmental Legacies

Tues. Sept. 17

Otsuki, Tomoe. "Nuclear Futurism and Narrating Queer Futurity in Yanobe Kenji's *The Sun Child* and Tawada Yōko's *The Emissary*." *Asian Studies Review* 46, no. 3 (2022): 455-472. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2020.1849027>.

Tawada, Yōko. "The Island of Eternal Life." In *March Was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown*. Edited by Elmer Luke and David Karashima. New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2012. 3-12.

Thurs. Sept. 19

Ishimure, Michiko. "Reborn from the Earth and Scarred by Modernity: Minamata Disease and the Miracle of the Human Desire to Live." Translated by Michael Bourdaghs. *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 6, issue 4 (2008): <https://apjif.org/-Ishimure-Michiko/2732/article.pdf>.

Tsuchimoto, Noriaki, director. *Hiroshima no Pika*, 2005. 25 minutes. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/watch/hiroshima-no-pika?utm_campaign=Video&utm_medium=MARC&utm_source=aspresolver

Content note: violence, death, bodily harm including children

Performance and Memories of War

Tues. Sept. 24

Igarashi, Yoshikuni. *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture 1945-1970*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. 122-129.

Thompson, Lee. "The Wrestler Rikidozan as a Site of Memory." *Sport in Society* 14, no. 4 (May 2011): 532-541.

Thurs. Sept. 26

Seto, Tomoko. "From the Stage to the Ring: The Early Years of Japanese Women's Professional Wrestling, 1948–1956." *Journal of Women's History* 33, number 3 (Fall 2021): 61-85, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/805545>.

Longinotto, Kim, director. *Gaea Girls Part 1*. 2000, 53 minutes: <https://video-alexanderstreet-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/watch/gaea-girls-part-1/details?context=channel:under-the-sun-20>

Tues. Oct. 1

Mishima, Yukio and Hosoe Eikoh. *Barakei Ordeal of Roses*. Aperture, 1985. Excerpts.

Mishima, Yukio. *Confessions of a Mask*. Translated by Meredith Weatherby. New York, NY: New Directions, 1958. Excerpts.

Content Note: Violence, sexuality, and suicide

Thurs. Oct. 3

Tomii, Reiko. "State V. (Anti-) Art: Model 1,000 Yen Incident by Akasegawa Genpei and Company." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, number 1 (Spring 2002): 141-172, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/28006>.

Akasegawa, Genpei. "The *Objet* After Stalin." Translated by Pedro Erber. *Art Margins* 4, issue 3 (October 2015): 115-118, https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1162/ARTM_a_00126.

Manga and Mass Culture

Tues. Oct. 8

Tezuka, Osamu. "The Birth of Astro Boy" and "The Greatest Robot on Earth." In *Astro Boy Omnibus Volume 1*. Dark Horse Comics, 2015. 11-35 and 427-609.

Rosenbaum, Roman. "Reading Shōwa History Through Manga: *Astro Boy* as the Avatar of Postwar Japanese Culture." In *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*. Edited by Roman Rosenbaum. Taylor and Francis Group, 2012: 40-60.

Thurs. Oct. 10

Screening/flex day. Details TBA!

Friday Oct. 11: Midterm paper is due.

Tues. Oct. 15

No class

Thurs. Oct. 17

No class

Tues. Oct. 22

Fujita, Toshiya, director. *Lady Snowblood*. Toho, 1973. 96 minutes.

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1380912872>.

Streaming on Kanopy through the library.

trigger warning: rape, violence, nudity

Thurs. Oct. 24

Koike, Kazuo. *Lady Snowblood*. Dark Horse Comics, 2005. Excerpts.

Bolton, Matthew. "'Like Oil and Water:' Adaptation as Textuality, Intertextuality, and Metatextuality in *Lady Snowblood* (Fujita, 1973)." *Studies in 20th and 21st Century Literature* 42, Issue 1 (September 20, 2017): <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1976>.

Tues. Oct. 29

Ikeda, Riyoko. *The Rose of Versailles*. Udon Entertainment, 2020. Excerpts.

Shamoon, Deborah. "Revolutionary Romance: *The Rose of Versailles and the Transformation of Shōjo Manga*," *Mechademia Second Arc*, number 1 (January 2007): 3-17, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=340777>

Thurs. Oct. 31

Hemmann, Kathryn. *Manga Cultures and the Female Gaze*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020: 17-46.

Takeuchi, Naoko. *Sailor Moon*. Kodansha Comics, 2011. Excerpts.

Dance and the Body

Tues. Nov. 5

Sas, Miryam. *Experimental Arts in Postwar Japan: Moments of Encounter, Engagement, and Imagined Return*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011: 129-139.

Esposito, Paola. and Toshiharu Kasai. "Butoh Dance, Noguchi Taiso, and Healing." In *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Well-Being*. Oxford, 2017: 20 pages.

Hosoe Eikoh, *Navel and A-Bomb*, 1960, 14 min 21 sec:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DlgAqjzT3JE>

Thurs. Nov. 7

Nakamura, Karen and Hisako Matsuo. "Female Masculinity and Fantasy Spaces: Transcending Genders in the Takarazuka Theatre and Japanese Popular Culture." In *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*. Edited by James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki. Taylor and Francis Group, 2002. 59-76.

Ueda, Shinji. "The Rose of Versailles: A Takarazuka Grand Romantic Play." Translated by Kenko Kawasaki. In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Drama*. Edited by J.T. Rimer, M. Mori, and M. C. Poulton. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014. 663-689.

Architecture and Atmosphere

Tues. Nov. 12

Furuhata, Yuriko. *Climatic Media: Transpacific Experiments in Atmospheric Control*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022. 104-132.

ARTE France. "Yoyogi [NOTE: the title online is misspelled as Yoyogo] Olympic Gymnasium: Architectures--Achievements in Modern Architecture." 2006, 25 minutes. https://fod-infobase-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=65341

Thurs. Nov. 14

Mizuta, Noriko and Eiji Sekine. "Beyond Home and City." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 30 (2018): 120-155, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48618704>.

Field, Norma. *From My Grandmother's Bedside: Sketches of Postwar Tokyo* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997. Excerpts.

Feminism, Coloniality, and The Nation

Tues. Nov. 19

Tsushima, Yūko. "The Possibility of Imagination in these Islands." Translated by Geraldine Harcourt. *boundary* 2, issue 21, number 1 (1994): 191-197.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/303411> .

Ching, Leo. "Musha Incident, Incidentally: Tsushima Yūko's *Exceedingly Barbaric*." In *The Musha Incident: A Reader on the Indigenous Uprising in Colonial Taiwan*. Edited by Michael Berry. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. 122-135.

Thurs. Nov. 21

Schieder, Chelsea Szendi. *Coed Revolution: The Female Student in the Japanese New Left*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021: 1-20.

Shigematsu, Setsu. "'68 and the Japanese Women's Liberation Movement." In *The Red Years: Theory, Politics, and Aesthetics in the Japanese '68*. Edited by Gavin Walker. London and New York: Verso, 2020. 77-98.

Tues. Nov. 26

Aalgard, Scott W. "Crickets in the Weeds: Yū Miri, Critical Sonority, and the Crises of the Everyday." *Japan Forum* 33, no. 2 (2021): 278-300.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2019.1679224>.

Yū, Miri. "Excerpt: The End of August." Translated by Morgan Giles. *Literary Hub*. (August 3, 2023). <https://lithub.com/the-end-of-august/>.

Thurs. Nov. 28

screening: Kurihara, Nanako, director. *Ripples of Change*. Women Make Movies, 1993. 57 minutes. DVD. <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/551181536>.

Tues. Dec. 3

last day, summing up, writing groups.