

Transnational Anime: Japanese Animation History and Theory

University of Oregon - JPN 407/507 - Fall 2014

Classes – Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00 to 3:20 p.m. in 122 MCK

Screenings – Fridays 11:00 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. in 262 LIL

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Office: Friendly Hall 427

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:30, Wednesdays 3:30-4:30

DESCRIPTION

This class is an examination of the first half-decade of the commercial Japanese animated film and television industry, with a focus on the many transnational, transcultural, and trans-industrial exchanges that took place between animation studios, animators, and audiences in Japan and the United States.

The history of *anime* in the U.S. is nearly as long as the history of Japanese animation itself. After World War II, Japanese animated films were aggressively sold and screened to American audiences. From the 1960s to 1970s, Japanese cartoon series and films played from coast-to-coast on U.S. TV networks. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, American consumers began to recognize Japanese cartoons (or “Japanimation”) as a unique style of cartoon and a particular form of national representation. That recognition stretched into the 1980s and 1990s, when screenings and sales of *anime* exploded in North America, supported by grassroots college fan clubs and independent VHS distributors. By the turn of the century, the Japanese government was openly promoting the distribution of *anime* and other “Cool Japan” products around the globe. Today, *anime* is an internationally-recognized Japanese moving image industry.

Like the films of Ozu Yasujiro, Kurosawa Akira, and Mizoguchi Kenji decades ago, it appears that the cartoons of Miyazaki Hayao and media franchises like *Pokemon* have taken on roles as cultural ambassadors, promoting Japanese media products to foreign audiences while artistically illustrating the specificity and singularity of the Japanese national experience.

As scholars and students of culture and media, it is our job to complicate and historicize these assumptions. In this class we will shift the focus of *anime*'s global impact from one of tradition to one of *translation*—translation in a historical sense, between Japan, the U.S., and the many other nations that support global animation industries; and in a technological sense, between film screens, television tubes, home video formats, and now the Internet.

We will begin our analysis with the assumption that *anime* presents a multidimensional view of the world. Not just a view of how the social practices of one region contrast with those of another, but a gaze into the ways that film and television industries facilitate viewers' perceived connections to cultural and technological positions. While *anime* certainly has much to teach us about Japanese society, Japanese history, and Japanese cultural specificity, it has at least as much to teach us about film and television history, and the ways that moving image entertainment industries imagine, develop, and challenge national boundaries in a ‘borderless’ world. We will approach Japanese cartoons as we would any national cinema in an academic context—by historicizing and theorizing the ways that *anime*'s identities are created in the in-between spaces that connect global film and media cultures.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Main text: Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

Additional journal articles: Please refer to the schedule below.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Class Participation

All students are expected to attend and actively participate in all class meetings and screenings. Attendance will be recorded. Absences due to sickness must be formally documented. Unexcused absences will have a negative effect on the final grade. More than two (2) unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course.

As this is a seminar-style course, your consistent participation is crucial. Please complete the day's reading assignments before class. Take notes, write down any questions you have, and be prepared to share your responses and discuss how each reading inflects our critique of *anime* as a transnational medium. Attendance and active participation in class will constitute 25% of your total course grade.

Screenings

There is a required class screening each week. Some of the screenings will include canonical titles; many feature rare or historical titles that are generally unavailable outside of Japan. In the era of tape-trading and U.S. university Japanimation clubs, group viewings of "rare" videos were an essential part of *anime*'s discursive reconstruction. Our screenings are also a crucial part of this course, and a necessary tool for understanding the history of *anime*. Attendance at screenings will be recorded. Please plan to attend. It will be fun!

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Blogging Assignment

All students should make at least two (2) submissions to the class blog each week. One should be an original post where you address an issue in the readings, discussions, or screenings that you found stimulating or have further questions about. Your original post should be at least 250-300 words long, but feel free to write as much as you can to express your ideas. Your second submission should be a response to another person's post. This should be at least 100-150 words long. Both blog comments each week will be Friday night of that week.

When responding to another comment, feel free to ask questions, suggest new interpretations, or otherwise constructively challenge the OP's comments, but always be respectful of your peers' ideas. Conversation and debate are encouraged; flame wars are not!

Your blog posts will be graded on a three-level scale depending on how detailed your comments are and how deeply they explore the theme of the course. The combined scores from your blog submissions will make up 15% of your course grade.

Research Paper

The main assignment for this class is an extended research project. I will ask you to conduct original research on a Japanese/internationally co-produced cartoon film, TV show, or video title of your choice. This assignment will have three main components:

1. A research prospectus and annotated bibliography. Write a two-page proposal for your research project that describes a) the title you wish to study, b) your (tentative) historical or theoretical argument about how that title relates to “anime theory” as we are studying it in class, and c) the published sources, materials, and methods you plan to use for the essay. Your annotated bibliography must include five different academic sources with short descriptions (at least three sentences each) of what those documents are about.
2. A research presentation. Make a short presentation to the class (about 15 minutes) describing your topic, your thesis, the published sources you are reading, and any potential questions or problems you’re having with your work. Feel free to bring short clips to share with the class. This will be graded, but it is not a presentation of your final research—this is an introduction of your research as a work-in-progress.
3. A final written research paper with academic sources, proper in-text citations (footnotes or endnotes) and a complete bibliography. The length should be 1500-2000 words for undergraduate, or 2500-3000 words for graduate students.

Detailed instructions for the research assignment will be given in class.

PLAGIARISM

It should go without saying that plagiarism of any kind is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, and disciplinary action from the University. All of your sources must be properly and clearly cited. If you have questions about plagiarism, references, or proper citation, consult the University guidelines (for example, see <http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>), but please remember that it is *your responsibility* to understand your obligations as a student and a scholar.

GRADING

Attendance and participation at all meetings	25%
Blogging	15%
Paper prospectus and bibliography	15%
Research presentation	15%
Research Paper	30%

CLASS SCHEDULE – Subject to change. Changes will be announced in class.

WEEK ONE

Monday, September 29 class

What is anime? Class introduction, conversation, and clips.

Wednesday, October 1 class

1. Hayward, "Introduction: Defining the 'National' of a Country's Cinematographic Production"
2. Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema"
3. Imamura, "Japanese Art and the Animated Cartoon"

Friday, October 3 screening

Akira (アキラ, 1988)

WEEK TWO

Monday, October 6 class

1. Greenberg, "The Animated Text: Definition"
2. Miyao, "Thieves of Baghdad"
3. Miyao, "Before *anime*: Animation and the Pure Film Movement in pre-war Japan"

Wednesday, October 8 class

1. McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool"
2. Lam, "Japan's Quest for 'Soft Power'"
3. Hu, "The Animated Resurrection of the Legend of the White Snake in Japan"

Friday, October 10 screening

The Scribbling Kitten (こねこのらくがき, 1957), The Kitten's Studio (こねこのスタジオ, 1959), Panda and the Magic Serpent (白蛇伝 1958)

WEEK THREE

Monday, October 13 class

1. Ueno, "Japanimation and Techno-Orientalism"
2. Yoshimoto, "The Difficulty of Being Radical"
3. Azuma, "The Otaku's Pseudo-Japan" (from *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*)

Wednesday, October 15 class

1. Lamarre, *The Anime Machine* – Preface and Introduction
2. Steinberg, "Limiting Animation, Inventing Anime" (from *Anime's Media Mix*)

Friday, October 17 screening

Astro Boy (鉄腕アトム, 1963~) episode, Minna no uta (みんなのうた, 1961~) episode, King Kong (キングコング, 1966) episode, Puss in Boots (長靴をはいた猫, 1969)

WEEK FOUR

Monday, October 20 class

1. Iwabuchi, "Undoing Inter-national Fandom"
2. Iwabuchi, "How 'Japanese' is Pokemon?"
3. 1990s academic writing on anime (Read at least one):
 - a. Newitz, "Anime Otaku: Japanese Animation Fans Outside Japan"
 - b. Newitz, "Magical Girls and Atomic Bomb Sperm"
 - c. Pointon, "Transcultural Orgasm as Apocalypse"

Wednesday, October 22 class

1. Nornes, "For an Abusive Subtitling"
2. Condry, "Dark Energy: What Fansubs Reveal about the Copyright Wars"
3. Cubbison, "Anime Fans, DVDs, and the Authentic Text"

Friday, October 24 screening

Robotech (超時空要塞マクロス, 1982/1985) episode, *Macross: Do You Remember Love?* (超時空要塞マクロス 愛・おぼえていますか, 1984)

WEEK FIVE

Monday, October 27 class

1. Lamarre, *The Anime Machine* chapters 1-5

Wednesday, October 29 class

1. Orbaugh, "Emotional Infectivity: Cyborg Affect and the. Limits of the Human"
2. Bolton, "The Mecha's Blind Spot"

Friday, October 31 screening

Angel's Egg (天使のたまご, 1985) clips, *In the Aftermath* (1988) clips, *Patlabor 2* (機動警察パトレイバー The Movie 2, 1993)

WEEK SIX

Monday, November 3 class

1. Lamarre, *The Anime Machine* chapters 6-10

Wednesday, November 5 class

1. Dailot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age"
2. Magnan-Park, "Robot Taekwon V"
3. Ruh, "Transforming U.S. Anime in the 1980s"

Friday, November 7 screening

TBA

WEEK SEVEN

Monday, November 10 class

1. Lamarre, *The Anime Machine* chapters 11-15

Wednesday, November 12 class

1. Azuma, "Anime or Something Like It: *Neon Genesis Evangelion*"
2. Napier, "When the Machines Stop"
3. Malone, Ashby, and Lamarre, "Three Faces of Anime"

Friday, November 14 screening

Neon Genesis Evangelion: Death (True)² (新世紀エヴァンゲリオン劇場版 DEATH (TRUE)², 1997) and *The End of Evangelion* (新世紀エヴァンゲリオン劇場版 Air/まごころを、君に, 1997)

WEEK EIGHT

Monday, November 17 class

1. Lamarre, *The Anime Machine* chapters 16-20

Wednesday, November 19 class

1. Denison, "Star Spangled Ghibli"
2. Moist & Bartholow, "When Pigs Fly"

Friday, November 21 screening

On Your Mark (オン・ユア・マーク, 1995), *Princess Mononoke* (もののけ姫, 1997)

WEEK NINE

Monday, November 24 class

1. Lamarre, *The Anime Machine* chapters 21-22 and Conclusion
2. Ueno, "What is Animation?"

Wednesday, November 26 class/screening

TBA

Friday, November 28

Thanksgiving Holiday—no class

WEEK TEN

Monday, December 1 and Wednesday, December 3 classes - *Your presentations*

Friday, December 5 optional screening – TBA

FINAL PAPER DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10