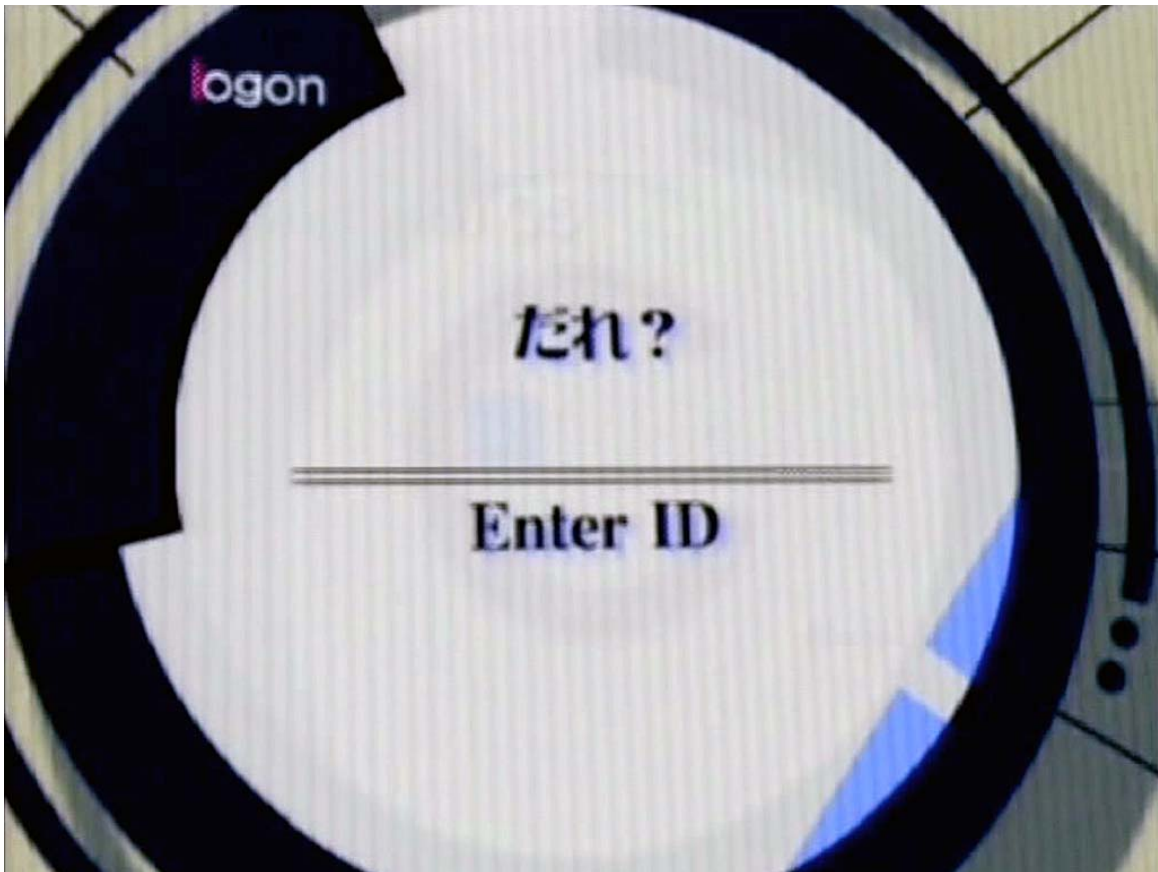


East Asian Studies 294a: Explorations of Japanese Animation



Fall 2003, TR 1:10-2:25, 1120 Stevenson Center

Professor Gerald Figal
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225 Benson Hall, 322-3359
Office Hours: TR 3:00-4:30

Course manifesto

Animated films and TV programs (anime) rank among contemporary Japan's most prominent global exports and most important domestic media products. The range of audience and content in anime alone—from cartoony kid shows to sophisticated feature films to fantastical romances to philosophically complex SF to stomach-churningly violent pornography—render it a significant object of study as a product of the so-called “information society” of late capitalist, postmodern Japan. Many anime treat themes more associated with “serious art” and thus require us to take them seriously even as we enjoy them as “simple” entertainment. While one risks taking the enjoyment out of any pop cultural form by submitting it to academic scrutiny, we will enjoin our study of anime in the belief that close analysis of anime will enhance our enjoyment of it. At the very least, the anime fans among you will have a rationalization for your addiction and get credit for it.

“The net is wide and infinite,” contemplates Major Kusanagi Motoko at the end of the cyber-tech anime *Ghost in the Shell*, “so where do I go from here?” The same can be said of the field of anime—it is wide and seemingly infinite and the choices it presents are legion. The material for this course is thus necessarily selective while still trying to be representative of major genres, recurrent themes, and important artists. Our explorations of anime will include issues of memory and identity; humans and nature; humans and technology; carnivalesque comedy; gender relations; historical, speculative, and apocalyptic visions; the “Japaneseness” of anime; and traits of the medium. The works of Miyazaki Hayao will receive special attention as noteworthy examples of feature-length animated films.

Course work

Four Think Pieces of 300-500 words: 20% total

Two Engaging Thoughts papers of 1200-1600 words on selected topics: 20% each

One Term Project of 2400-3000 words on topic of choice: 25% (oral report optional)

Class participation (including attendance and online discussions): 15%

There are no traditional exams, but success at the writings and class participation will require conscientious preparation of course materials, printed and visual. I reserve the right to administer unannounced diagnostic tests if I determine that your personal intellectual hygiene is lacking. Vanderbilt University's Honor Code governs all work in this course.

Course materials (all required unless otherwise noted)

Drazen, *Anime Explosion: The What, Why, and Wow of Japanese Animation*

McCarthy, *Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation*

Napier, *Anime: From Akira to Princess Mononoke*

Clements & McCarthy, *The Anime Encyclopedia* (recommended)

Electronic Reading (ER) via Prometheus/course web site

Screenings of anime in and outside of class (Tues or Wed, and Thurs, 7-9PM in Wilson 115)

NOTE: In conjunction with our course, anime scholar Susan Napier will give a presentation on campus September 26 entitled "Shôjo in Wonderland: Local Meets Global in 'Spirited Away'." Attendance and Think Piece of event are required.

Course expectations

First and foremost, I believe in enjoying the pursuit of knowledge, in having fun with thoughts, in being interested in learning about something for its own sake and not for the sake of a grade. (For better or for worse, however, we live in a world of measured performance so I am ultimately compelled to give you grades.) Whether or not you share my belief in joy through knowledge, I do expect everybody to put out their best effort. If you are not motivated and serious about reading, writing, and discussing about Japanese animation, then *sayonara!*; if you are motivated and serious, then hang around and we'll have some fun as we work. I would much rather conduct the class in a spirit of intellectual camaraderie and with a mutual commitment to excellence rather than through unilateral threats of failure. You and I will get as much out of this course as we put in to it; no more no less. I pledge my full effort; it's up to you to pledge yours. It is my hope that you all will get a lot more from this course than you expected when you signed up for it.

This course involves substantial (and I hope engaging) reading and writing since these activities are time-tested means to thoughtful inquiry and learning. The grades you earn are a measure of the care you take in this inquiry and learning. Accordingly, the signification of letter grades for written assignments and exams in the course is as follows:

- An "A" applies to work judged to be impressive in demonstrating command of the material (including accuracy and thoroughness in representing the readings), active engagement and original thinking in working with relevant ideas, and superlative presentation. "A" work rocks my world.
- A "B" applies to work judged to be of distinctive quality, widely responsible to the readings, well-organized, and possessing a thoughtful point of view. "B" work tugs at me with interest, like a new local band that has potential as long as they don't sell out to commercial mediocrity.
- A "C" applies to work judged to be of sound (albeit monotonic) quality, basically responsible to the readings and composed around a fairly standard bass line. "C" work barely stirs me, like bland Top 40 stuff.
- Work below a "C" is deficient of content and presentation, suggestive of inadequate attention to assigned readings, class sessions, and personal intellectual hygiene. Hurts my ears.

Some other things that generally do not exist in this course are "deadline extensions." Exceptions to this policy for valid reasons can only be made on a case-by-case basis, but you must plead your case well before the fact and I will determine what is valid and what is not as well as what, if any, grade-lowering such an exception will cost you. I will tell you right now that such cases as "the computer ate my file" or "I lost my disk" or "the printers were jammed" or "my best friend is in town" or "I just fell in love and can't think straight" or "I just broke up with my boy/girlfriend and can't think straight" or "I have to party until 3AM, puke my guts out, and stay in bed all day with a hangover" are not considered valid. Be sure to examine the syllabus for the schedule of work and make your semester plans accordingly.

Program Guide

Layer 01: ELEMENTS

Th (08.28)	Topic:	Anime as popular entertainment and academic subject
	Reading:	Napier, Chpt. 1: Why Anime?
Tu (09.02)	Topic:	Historical and cultural contexts for anime
	Reading:	Drazen, chpt. 1.1; Napier, chpt. 2 Raffaelli, "Disney, Warner Bros. & Japanese Animation" (ER)
	Viewing:	<i>Scrolls to Screen: A Brief History of Anime</i>
	Screening:	<i>R.O.D. (Read or Die)</i>
Th (09.04)	Topic:	Genres, themes, and stylistic conventions
	Reading:	Drazen, chpts. 1.2 and 1.3 Satô, "More Animated Than Life" (ER)
	Surfing:	"The Laws of Anime" (for your amusement)
	Viewing:	Clips: <i>Kenshin</i> , <i>Princess Nine</i> , <i>Kare Kano</i>

Layer 02: REFLECTIONS

Tu (09.09)	Topic:	(Re)animating the war in postwar Japan
	Reading:	Drazen, chpt. 1.15; Napier, chpt. 9 Yoshida, "The Space Cruiser Yamato Generation" (ER)
	Surfing:	Info on Grave of the Fireflies
	Viewing:	Clips: <i>Space Battleship Yamato</i> ; <i>Moldiver</i> (ep. 4)
	Screening:	<i>Grave of the Fireflies</i>
Th (09.11)	Topic:	Post-atomic pacificism
	Viewing:	Clips: <i>Barefoot Gen</i> and <i>Memories</i>
	Writing:	Think Piece #1 due

Layer 03: VISIONS

Tu (09.16)	Topic:	Miyazaki Hayao and Studio Ghibli
	Reading:	Drazen, chpt. 2.5; McCarthy, chpts. 1 & 3 Schodt, "Nausicaä and the Manga-Anime Link" (ER)
	Surfing:	Info on Nausicaä
	Screening:	<i>Nausicaä of the Valley of the Winds</i>
Th (09.18)	Topic:	Shôjo, nature, and supernatural
	Reading:	Drazen, chpts 1.12, 1.14; McCarthy, chpt 5; Napier, chpt. 7
	Surfing:	Info on Totoro and Kiki
	Viewing:	Clips from <i>My Neighbor Totoro</i> & <i>Kiki's Delivery Service</i>

- Tu (09.23) Topic: Human history and (super)natural disaster
 Reading: Napier, chpt. 10; McCarthy, chpt. 8
 Surfing: Info on [Princess Mononoke](#)
 Viewing: Clips: *Heisei Tanuki Gassen Ponpoko*
 Screening: *Princess Mononoke*
- Th (09.25) Topic: Folklore and historical fantasy
 Reading: Drazen, chpt. 1.4
 Schilling, ["Lost and Found in a Dream" \(online review\)](#)
 Surfing: Info on [Spirited Away](#)
 Screening: *Spirited Away*
- F (09.26) Special Presentation by Susan Napier (3:00-5:00PM, place TBA):
 "Shôjo in Wonderland: Local Meets Global in *Spirited Away*"

Layer 04: GENDERS

- Tu (09.30) Topic: The cult of cute
 Reading: Drazen, chpt. 2.6; Kinsella, "Cuties in Japan" (ER)
 Viewing: *Sailor Moon Super S*, ep. 13; *Cardcaptor Sakura* ep. 2
 Screening: *Urusei Yatsura* (ep. 1); *Video Girl Ai* (ep. 1-2);
Chobits (ep. 1)
- Th (10.02) Writing: Think Piece #2 due
 Topic: Boy meets (magical) Girl
 Reading: Napier, chpt. 8
 Viewing: *Video Girl Ai* (ep. 6)
 [Screening: *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (eps. 1-3)]
- Tu (10.07) Topic: Boys, girls, boy-girls, and girl-boys
 Reading: Napier, pp. 48-62
 Aso, "Revolutionary Girls: From Oscar to Utena"
 Viewing: *Ranma 1/2* (ep. 1); *Urusei Yatsura* (ep. 90/113)
 Screening: *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (eps. 1-4)
 Writing: Term Project Proposal due
- Th (10.09) Topic: Bending gender, staying straight
 Reading: Drazen, chpt. 1.7, 2.3
 Viewing: *His and Her Circumstances* (eps. 1-2)
 [Screening: *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (eps. 4-6)]

Layer 05: CULTURES

- Tu (10.14) Topic: Polycultural mélange and avant-retro fusion
 Reading: Drazen, chpt. 2.4
 Surfing: Info on [Cowboy Bebop](#)
 Viewing: Clips: *Blade Runner*, *Giant Robo*, *Cowboy Bebop*
 Screening: *Cowboy Bebop* (Sessions 2-3, 5, 12-13, 17)

Th (10.16) Topic: Culture and ethnicity in a remixed future
 Reading: Ruh, "Playing With an International Future: The World of Cowboy Bebop"
 Viewing: Cowboy Bebop (eps. 25-26)
 [Screening: Neon Genesis Evangelion (eps. 7-9)]
 Writing: Engaging Thoughts #1 due

Layer 06: BODIES

Tu (10.21) October Break
 Screening: *Akira*
 Surfing: Anime material on [Cyber Arts Web](#)

Th (10.23) Topic: Bodies in transformation: the power of change
 Reading: Napier, chpts. 3-4
 Freiberg, "Akira and the Postnuclear Sublime" (ER)
 Viewing: Clips: *Sailor Moon*, *Cutey Honey*, *Ranma*, *Wicked City*
 [Screening: Neon Genesis Evangelion (eps. 10-12)]

Tu (10.28) Topic: The mecha-ization of bodies: the power of technology
 Reading: Napier, chpt. 5
 Viewing: *Bubblegum Crisis* (ep. 1); *Moldiver* (ep. 1)
 Screening: *Patlabor 2*

Th (10.30) Topic: Human-machine relations
 Reading: Bolton, "The Mecha's Blind Spot: *Patlabor 2* and the Phenomenology of Anime" (ER)
 Viewing: Clips: *Tetsuwan Atomu* (aka *Astroboy*); *Metropolis*
 [Screening: Neon Genesis Evangelion (eps. 13-15)]
 Writing: Think Piece #3 due

Tu (11.04) Topic: Cyborg bodies and the boundaries of the human
 Reading: González, "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies" (ER)
 Chute, "The Soul of the New Machine: Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell*" (ER)
 Drazen, 2.12
 Surfing: Ruh, "Liberating Cels: Forms of the Female in Japanese Cyberpunk Animation" (ER)
 Viewing: Opening sequence of *Ghost in the Shell*
 Screening: *Ghost in the Shell*

Th (11.06) Topic: Toward the posthuman
 Reading: Napier, chpt. 6
 Orbaugh, "Sex and the Single Cyborg" (ER)
 Silvio, "Refiguring the Radical Cyborg in Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*" (ER)
 [Screening: Neon Genesis Evangelion (eps. 16-18)]

Layer 07: MINDS

- Tu (11.11) Topic: Mind over matter, matter over mind
Surfing: [TechTV's Serial Experiments Lain Guide](#)
Viewing: *Serial Experiments Lain* (ep. 1-2)
Screening: *Serial Experiments Lain* (eps. 3, 8, 10-13)
Writing: Engaging Thoughts #2 due
- Th (11.13) Topic: Digital identity: no-body, never-mind
Reading: Napier, "When the Machines Stop: Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Serial Experiments Lain*" (ER)
[Screening: *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (eps. 19-22)]
- Tu (11.18) Topic: Apocalypse of the mind
Reading: Napier, chpt. 11; Drazen, 2.8
Screening: *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (eps. 23-26)
- Th (11.20) Topic: Eva as the End of Anime?
Surfing: Tsuribe, "[Prison of Self-Consciousness: An Essay on Evangelion](#)" (ER)
Broderick, "[Anime's Apocalypse: Neon Genesis Evangelion as Millenarian Mecha](#)" (ER)
Screening: *The End of Evangelion*
Writing: Think Piece #4 (online discussion topic) due

Thanksgiving Break (11.22-11.30)

Layer 08: FANS

- Tu (12.02) Topic: Anime's global fandom
Reading: Napier, Appendix and "Peek-A-Boo Pikachu: Exporting an Asian Subculture" (ER)
Newitz, "Anime Otaku: Japanese Animation Fans Outside Japan" (ER)
Screening: *Otaku no Video*; Various Anime Music Videos
- Th (12.04) Topic: The anatomy of an otaku
Viewing: *This is Otakudom* (Fan parody by Scott Melzer)
- Tu (12.09) Topic: Oral reports and parting thoughts
Term Project due by Thursday (12.11)