



Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy

EALC 3251 – Fall 2023

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:45 – 3:14PM
Meyerson Hall, Room B4

This course will provide an overview of the major themes, tropes, and interpretations of contemporary Japanese science fiction and fantasy. As we establish a foundational knowledge of the history and structural formulations of genre fiction in Japan, we will cover topics such as folklore, high fantasy, apocalypse, dystopia, magical realism, posthumanism, urban fantasy, and transnational media franchises and cross-cultural marketing.

This course is designed to strengthen proficiency in the methods of formal literary and media analysis, and students will also be encouraged to develop critical thinking by means of creative expression. The course lectures will situate representative works and writers within a broader context while making comparisons with stories told in different cultures and in different media formats. Class discussions will provide an opportunity for close readings, creative writing, and considerations of animated and cinematic adaptations.

By the end of the semester, students will possess a deeper understanding and appreciation of the role that science fiction and fantasy play in shaping contemporary media cultures in Japan and around the world.

Instructor

Dr. Kathryn Hemmann
khemmann@gmail.com
Office hours by appointment

Course Texts

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, Vol. 1, by Hayao Miyazaki
The Memory Police, by Yoko Ogawa
All You Need Is Kill, by Hiroshi Sakurazaka
Log Horizon, Vol. 1: The Beginning of Another World, by Mamare Touno
Land of the Lustrous, Vol. 1, by Haruko Ichikawa
The Ancient Magus' Bride, Vol. 1, by Kore Yamazaki

Grading and Assignments

Participation: 30%
Three Short Papers: 30%
Final Project: 25%
Final Project Proposal: 15%

Participation

Students are expected to complete all required reading assignments and to be attentive during class lectures and discussions. Repeated lack of preparation will significantly lower the participation grade, as will a demonstrated lack of respect for the instructor or the other students. Class participation is graded according to the following rubric:

- A – Strong participation, contributes at least once or twice during each class.
- B – Fair participation, contributes once or twice a week.
- C – Minimal participation, does not contribute but attends class.
- D – Poor participation, does not contribute or attend class regularly.
- F – No participation, demonstrates disrespect and frequently does not attend class.

Three Short Responses

There will be three short responses due over the course of the semester. The due dates are **September 21, October 26, and November 30**. A response can be either analytical or creative. Analytical papers should be roughly 800 words (about three or four paragraphs) and should respond to the reading assigned since the due date of the last response. Creative writing should be roughly the same length as analytical papers, and responses in other media should reflect a similar amount of production time (of about an hour). Responses should be submitted by email.

Final Project

Students have two options concerning the final project. The first option is a six-to-eight-page research paper that draws on a minimum of five secondary sources. Your paper may address any topic relating to Japanese fantasy and science fiction, including but not limited to: novels, short stories, movies, graphic novels, anime series, visual novels, music videos, and video games. Topics not addressed in class and comparative approaches are welcome, but your project must relate to Japan in some way.

The second option is a creative project that explores the themes covered during the semester. An original science fiction or fantasy story of 2,000 to 2,500 words is permissible if the student is able to demonstrate how it relates to the course themes in their project proposal. Creative work in media other than prose fiction is welcome, but such creative projects will be graded on the basis of skill and originality and **are not recommended** for students with limited experience in their chosen artistic medium. For the purpose of this assignment, nonfiction PowerPoint presentations are not considered an “artistic medium” and will not be accepted in place of a paper.

Final Project Proposal

The goal of this proposal is to explain the questions and issues you wish to explore in your final project. If you are writing a research paper, your proposal should contain a thesis statement and a brief outline of the structure of your argument and how you will approach your topic. If you opt for a creative project, your proposal should state your artistic medium, provide at least one theme you wish to explore through your work, and specify the proposed length of your project (in terms of wordcount, comic pages, minutes of video, and so on). No matter what form your project takes, you are required to include a formal bibliographic list of at least five secondary sources (using whatever citation style you’re most comfortable with). Your proposal should be approximately one page (about 250 words) in length, not including the list of works referenced. A digital copy of your proposal is due by 5:00pm on Thursday, **October 5**.

Course Policies*Attendance*

Each student is allowed **two unexcused absences**, no questions asked and no excuses necessary. If you would like to excuse an absence, you must submit at least one form of written proof of legitimacy (photocopies and email attachments are fine). Please note that absence notices generated by Canvas do not count as proof of legitimacy. Each unexcused absence after the second will result in half a letter grade being deducted from your final course grade, in addition to a reduction of your participation grade. Please be aware that obligations for other classes (such as exams, labs, or study sessions) do not count as a valid excuse.

Technology

Tablets are permitted in their capacity as e-readers, but **smartphones are absolutely not allowed**. Any student expecting an urgent call or message should notify me before class begins. Laptops are permitted but not recommended. Students are cautioned to limit the use of laptops, as excessive screen engagement will significantly lower the in-class participation grade.

Disability Accommodation

I'm happy to grant reasonable deadline extensions to anyone who asks regardless of a formal declaration of disability. Just be sure to send me a request in writing via email so that I have a means of following up with you about the assignment.

Plagiarism

I have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism is surprisingly easy to catch, so please don't try it. This includes AI-generated text. You're primarily being graded on your good faith effort and engagement with the course material, and multiple deadline extensions are permitted, so there should be no need for you to submit work that is not your own.

Respect

Each student is expected to be respectful of the instructor and their peers. No speech or behavior demonstrating or encouraging discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, body shape, or disability will be tolerated.

Cultural essentialism, or the reduction of a large and diverse group of people into a set of stereotypes, is offensive and counter to the purpose of this course. The uncritical reproduction of generalizations and stereotypes in class discussions and written assignments will be penalized.

Content Warnings

As several of the assigned readings contain content suitable only for mature readers, students should be aware that we will encounter violent and graphic imagery. I will try to warn for such content in advance, but students should note that they will be responsible for alerting me to any specific triggers or other concerns. Please let me know, as I'm happy to work with you.

Anime Streaming

The three anime episodes assigned as required viewing are all available on Amazon, as well as other streaming services. Unfortunately, these episodes are not available through the university library's website, and students are responsible for watching them outside of class.

Week One: Overview of Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy

Tuesday, August 29

No assigned reading, but please familiarize yourself with the syllabus.

Thursday, August 31

Susan Napier, "Introduction," from *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity*, pp.1-20

Week Two: Folklore and Fairy Tales

Tuesday, September 5

Kunio Yanagita, *The Legends of Tono*, pp.5-21

Thursday, September 7

Kenji Miyazawa, "The Restaurant of Many Orders," from *Once and Forever*, pp.115-125

Week Three: Robots and Monsters

Tuesday, September 12

William Tsutsui, "The Birth of Gojira," from *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*, pp.13-42

Thursday, September 14

Frederik L. Schodt, "A National Icon," from *The Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, Manga/Anime Revolution*, pp.3-15

Week Four: Postwar Japanese Science Fiction

Tuesday, September 19

Kobo Abe, "The Bet," from *Beyond the Curve*, pp.183-212

Thursday, September 21

Masami Fukushima, "The Flower's Life Is Too Short," from *Speculative Japan*, pp.143-152

Moto Hagio, "Girl on Porch with Puppy," from *A Drunken Dream*, pp. 23-34

+ **Short Paper #1 Due Today**

Week Five: Postapocalyptic Science Fantasy

Tuesday, September 26

Hayao Miyazaki, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Vol. 1

Susan Napier, "Nausicaä and the Feminine Principle," from *Miyazakiworld*, pp.70-85

Thursday, September 28

Girls' Last Tour (2017), Episode One, "Starry Sky / War"

Week Six: Swords and Sorcery

Tuesday, October 3

Kaoru Kurimoto, *The Guin Saga, Book One: The Leopard Mask*, Chapter One: The Spirit Wood, pp.9-45

Thursday, October 5

Ryo Mizuno, *Record of Lodoss War: The Grey Witch*, Chapter I: The Adventurers, pp.7-32
+ **Final Project Proposal Due Today**

FALL BREAK – NO CLASS THIS WEEK

Tuesday, October 10 + Thursday, October 12

Week Seven: Magical Realism and Slipstream Fiction

Tuesday, October 17

Haruki Murakami, “Super-Frog Saves Tokyo,” from *After the Quake*, pp.91-114

Alex Bates, “Catfish, Super Frog, and the End of the World,” from *Natural Disasters in Asia*, pp.13-19

Thursday, October 19

Hiromi Kawakami, “Summer Break,” from *The God of Bears*

Week Eight: Dystopian Social Horror

Tuesday, October 24

Yoko Ogawa, *The Memory Police*

Thursday, October 26

Kōji Suzuki, “Floating Water,” from *Dark Water*, pp.15-51

+ **Short Paper #2 Due Today**

Week Nine: Magical Girls

Tuesday, October 31

Sailor Moon (1992), Episode Eight, “The Girl Genius Is a Monster: The Brainwashing Cram School of Horror”

Thursday, November 2

Puella Magi Madoka Magica (2011), Episode Ten, “I Won’t Rely on Anyone Anymore”

Week Ten: Escape to Another World

Tuesday, November 7

Mamare Touno, *Log Horizon, Vol. 1: The Beginning of Another World*

Thursday, November 9

Ao Omae, "Hello, Thank You, Everything's Fine," from *People Who Talk to Stuffed Animals Are Nice*, pp.135-161

Week Eleven: Posthuman Science Fiction

Tuesday, November 14

Jun Eishima, "A Much Too Silent Sea," from *Nier Automata: Short Story Long*, pp.165-184

Thursday, November 16

Haruko Ichikawa, *Land of the Lustrous*, Vol. 1

THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS THIS WEEK

Tuesday, November 21 + Thursday, November 23

Week Twelve: Global Multimedia

Tuesday, November 28

Hiroshi Sakurazawa, *All You Need Is Kill*

Thursday, November 30

Edge of Tomorrow (2014)

+ **Short Paper #3 Due Today**

Week Thirteen: The Distant Past and the Near Future

Tuesday, December 5

Kore Yamazaki, *The Ancient Magus' Bride*, Vol. 1

Thursday, December 7

Ananth Hirsh and Yuko Ota, *Barbarous*, Chapter 1

Final Project due on FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15

Please submit your work via email by the end of the calendar date.