



Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy

EALC 3251 – Fall 2025

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30–5:00PM

Classroom TBA

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, heroic fantasy, apocalypse, dystopia, magical realism, posthumanism, urban fantasy, 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
The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya, by Nagaru Tanigawa
All You Need Is Kill, by Hiroshi Sakurazaka
Land of the Lustrous, Vol. 1, by Haruko Ichikawa
Glitch, Vol. 1, by Shima Shinya
The Ancient Magus' Bride, Vol. 1, by Kore Yamazaki

Grading and Assignments

Participation: 20%
Three Short Responses: 30%
Weekly Quizzes: 50%

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.

Short Responses

There will be three short responses due over the course of the semester. The due dates are **September 18, October 23, and November 20**. A response can be either analytical or creative. Analytical responses should be roughly 500 words (about three paragraphs) and may respond to the writing prompts posted since the last response. Creative writing should be roughly the same length as analytical response, and responses in other media should reflect a similar amount of production time (of about 45 minutes to an hour). Responses will be submitted on Canvas.

Quizzes

Nine weekly quizzes will be administered via Canvas. These quizzes will consist of four to six simple questions, and they're intended to keep you on track with the reading assignments and current with the themes of our class discussions. The quizzes are untimed and completely open book, but students are expected to complete the quiz on their own and submit answers that they have written themselves. Quizzes are due at 5pm on Thursday, and the quiz will permanently close at 6pm on the due date. There will be no quizzes on weeks when short responses are due.

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.

Disability Accommodation

I'm happy to grant reasonable deadline extensions to anyone who asks regardless of a formal declaration of disability. Please 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 + AI Generated Writing

I have a zero-tolerance policy regarding plagiarism. This includes text generated by AI. 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. If I have reason to suspect that you did not write the work you have submitted, **you will automatically receive a zero grade on the entire assignment.**

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.

Week One: Overview of Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy

Tuesday, August 26

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

Thursday, August 28

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 2

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

Thursday, September 4

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

Week Three: Robots and Monsters

Tuesday, September 9

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

Thursday, September 11

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 16

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

Thursday, September 18

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 Response #1 Due Today**

Week Five: Postapocalyptic Science Fantasy

Tuesday, September 23

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

Thursday, September 25

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

Week Six: Swords and Sorcery

Tuesday, September 30

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

Thursday, October 2

Ryo Mizuno, *Record of Lodoss War: The Grey Witch*, Chapter I: The Adventurers, pp.7-32

FALL BREAK – NO CLASS THIS WEEK

Tuesday, October 7 + Thursday, October 9

Week Seven: Magical Realism and Slipstream Fiction

Tuesday, October 14

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 16

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

Week Eight: Dystopian Social Horror

Tuesday, October 21

Yoko Ogawa, *The Memory Police*

Thursday, October 23

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

+ **Short Response #2 Due Today**

Week Nine: Magical Girls

Tuesday, October 28

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

Thursday, October 30

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

Week Ten: Escape to Another World

Tuesday, November 4

Nagaru Tanigawa, *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*

Thursday, November 6
Zenshu (2025), Episode One, “First Stroke”

Week Eleven: Posthuman Science Fiction

Tuesday, November 11
Haruko Ichikawa, *Land of the Lustrous*, Vol. 1

Thursday, November 13
Jun Eishima, “A Much Too Silent Sea,” from *Nier Automata: Short Story Long*, pp.165-184

Week Twelve: Global Multimedia

Tuesday, November 18
Hiroshi Sakurazawa, *All You Need Is Kill*

Thursday, November 20
Shima Shinya, *Glitch*, Vol. 1
+ **Short Response #3 Due Today**

THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS THIS WEEK
Tuesday, November 25 + Thursday, November 27

Week Thirteen: The Distant Past and the Near Future

Tuesday, December 2
Kore Yamazaki, *The Ancient Magus’ Bride*, Vol. 1

Thursday, December 4
Ananth Hirsh and Yuko Ota, *Barbarous*, Chapter 1