



Japanese Ghost Stories

EALC 3252 – Fall 2024

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30PM – 5:00PM

Classroom TBA

This course offers a survey of the numinous and supernatural through Japanese fiction, drama, comics, animation, and video games from the Heian period to the present day. Students will assemble a foundational knowledge of Japanese religion and folklore while studying popular narrative traditions representative of their historical eras.

By peering into the liminal spaces connecting the living with the dead, students will develop critical thinking and media literacy through careful investigation into the matters that people of different times and places have perceived as monstrous, alien, and unspeakable. Issues of gender, sexuality, and ethnic minority status will receive special attention as we navigate theories relating to the cultural role and social relevance of ghosts. By the end of the semester, students will possess a broad perspective on Japanese narrative traditions and popular culture, as well as an understanding of how fantastic stories of the dead reflect the tangible experiences of the living.

Instructor

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

Course Texts

Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter, by Cecile Brun and Olivier Pichard
Summer, Fireworks, and My Corpse, by Otsuichi
Fragments of Horror, by Junji Ito
Ring, by Koji Suzuki
Sadako at the End of the World, by Koma Natsumi

Grading and Assignments

Participation: 15%
Five Quizzes: 25%
Two Short Responses: 20%
Research Presentation: 20%
Research Presentation Proposal: 10%
Short Creative Project: 10%

Quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class. They will consist of five simple questions and are intended to keep you on track with the reading assignments.

Short responses (of around 500 words) are opportunities to share your thoughts via open-ended prompts based on our class discussions. You will submit these assignments on Canvas.

The **short creative project** will be your original telling of an urban legend (of no more than 500 words). Everyone's work will be collected into a zine that will be shared with the class.

The **research presentation** will give you an opportunity to share your original research based on the themes of the class. Your presentation should be around five minutes long (about five slides).

Handouts with additional details will be provided. You can make up an in-class quiz or your final presentation **only if you submit written documentation** for an excusable absence.

Assignment Due Dates

Quizzes: September 12 + October 10 + October 24 + November 7 + November 21
Short Responses: September 26 + November 14
Creative Project: Thursday, October 17
Presentation Proposal: Thursday, October 31

Course Policies

Required Readings

Students must purchase the five books required for this class, but all of the articles and short stories will be available on the course site on Canvas. Students are required to complete all assigned readings before class. Please note that the novels will take time to read.

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.** Please be aware that obligations for other classes (such as exams or labs) do not count as a valid excuse.

Disability Accommodation

I'm happy to grant deadline extensions and accommodations to anyone who asks regardless of an official declaration of disability. Please feel free to request whatever you need, and please know that it's not necessary to share private or personal information with me. Still, please be sure to **send a request in writing** via email so that I have a means of following up with you if necessary.

Plagiarism and ChatGPT

I have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, which includes machine-generated text. If you submit work that isn't your own for any assignment for any reason, you will receive a score of zero points. You are being graded primarily on your good faith effort and engagement with the course material, 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 open to discussion, but its uncritical reproduction is counter to the purpose of this course.

Content Warnings

As many of the assigned readings fall into the genre of horror, students should be aware that we will encounter violent and graphic imagery. I will try to warn for explicit content in advance, but students should note that they will be responsible for alerting me to any special accommodations.

Week One: Contemporary Urban Legends

Tuesday, August 27

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

Thursday, August 29

Michael Dylan Foster, "The Question of the Slit-Mouthed Woman: Contemporary Legend, the Beauty Industry, and Women's Weekly Magazines in Japan"

Week Two: Religion and Folklore

Tuesday, September 3

Anne Allison, "Ambiguous Bones: Dead in the Past," from *Being Dead Otherwise*

Thursday, September 5

Royall Tyler, "Haunts," from *Japanese Tales*

Lafcadio Hearn, "Furisode," from *In Ghostly Japan*

Lafcadio Hearn, "The Story of Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi," from *Kwaidan*

Week Three: Lingering Twilight

Tuesday, September 10

Murasaki Shikibu, "Yūgao: The Twilight Beauty," from *The Tale of Genji*

Thursday, September 12

Zeami Motokiyo, "Izutsu: The Well-Cradle," from *Japanese Nō Dramas*

+ Quiz #1

Week Four: The Aesthetic of Cruelty

Tuesday, September 17

Akinari Ueda, "The Reed-Choked House," from *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*

Brenda Jordan, "Yūrei: Tales of Female Ghosts," from *Japanese Ghosts & Demons*

Thursday, September 19

Tsuruya Nanboku IV and Matsui Kozō II, "Kasane," from *Masterpieces of Kabuki*

Week Five: Yōkai Studies

Tuesday, September 24

Michael Dylan Foster, "Countryside," from *The Book of Yōkai*

Thursday, September 26

Gerald Figal, "Modern Science and the Folk," from *Civilization and Monsters*

+ Short Response #1 due by 5:00pm

Fall Break

Tuesday, October 1
Thursday, October 3

Week Six: Dark Tourism

Tuesday, October 8
Marilyn Ivy, "Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore," from *Discourses of the Vanishing*

Thursday, October 10
Cecile Brun and Olivier Pichard, *Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter*
+ Quiz #2

Week Seven: Into the Woods

Tuesday, October 15
Roger Luckhurst, "Forest," from *Gothic: An Illustrated History*
Lindsay Nelson, "The Haunted Forest: Circulating Aokigahara," from *Circulating Fear*

Thursday, October 17
Otsuichi, *Summer, Fireworks, and My Corpse*
+ Creative Project due by 5:00pm

Week Eight: Modern Cautionary Tales

Tuesday, October 22
Junji Ito, *Fragments of Horror*

Thursday, October 24
Another, Episodes 1, 2, and 3
+ Quiz #3

Week Nine: The Girl in the Well

Tuesday, October 29
Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," from *The Uncanny*

Wednesday, October 31
Koji Suzuki, *Ring*
+ Research Presentation Proposal due by 5:00pm

Week Ten: Naming the Invisible

Tuesday, November 5
Richard Lloyd Parry, "Ghosts of the Tsunami," from *The Passenger: Japan*

Thursday, November 7

Ryo Morimoto, "Naming the Nuclear Ghosts," from *Nuclear Ghost: Atomic Livelihoods in Fukushima's Gray Zone*

+ Quiz #4

Week Eleven: The Digital Gothic

Tuesday, November 12

Keza MacDonald, "Where *Dark Souls* Came FROM: An Origin Story" and "Tough Love: On *Dark Souls*' Difficulty," from *You Died: The Dark Souls Companion*

Daniel Johnson, "Networked Asymmetry: Uncanny Traces in the *Dark Souls* Series," from *Japanese Role-Playing Games*

Thursday, November 14

Sijbren Schenkels, "NextDoor"

Julie Muncy, "The Mysterious Japanese Game That Took 14 Years to Officially Come Out"

Eve McLachlan, "And You Were There: Loneliness and Community in *Yume Nikki*"

+ Short Response #2

Week Twelve: The Gentle Horror of Everyday Life

Tuesday, November 19

Aoko Matsuda, "Smartening Up" and "Quite a Catch," from *Where the Wild Ladies Are*

Thursday, November 21

Koma Natsumi, *Sadako at the End of the World*

+ Quiz #5

Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, November 26

Thursday, November 28

Week Thirteen: Student Research Presentations

Tuesday, December 3

Thursday, December 5