

A large, brown, metallic robot statue stands on a stone path in a park-like setting. The robot has a helmeted head, a torso with intricate mechanical details and rivets, and long, segmented arms with sharp, claw-like fingers. The background shows green foliage and a clear sky.

Manga Mania:

From Astroboy to Zeta Gundam in
Japanese Popular Media

Fall 2009

Timetable: Wed 14:00-15:15 and Friday 14:00-16:30

Classroom: Auditorium

Instructor: Dr. Darren Ashmore

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1300-1600

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed as a survey of important examples of Japanese comic and animation art – as historical moments, aesthetic movements and as Japanese (world even) popular cultural properties. It explores anime and manga, and its connected bodies from both media theory, and artistic directions, helping students build up an understanding of the media involved. We shall examine significant examples of the art (both in print and on screen), look at the national/global impact and consider how the Japanese perspective on cartoons has come to affect the way the whole world's media now looks at 'cartoons and comics'.

The course is designed to be interactive, and regular participation in seminar and screening/manga review will be required. However, this course is not simply an excuse to read comics and watch movies and it will, if properly and seriously approached by the student, help them develop a rigorous understanding of manga and anime history, artists, and its important bodies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the program, student will:

- Develop an understanding of exactly what anime and manga are.
- Be able differentiate between important styles and genres.
- Define the differences between Japanese and American/European animation/comics
- Recognize unique and borrowed techniques that are used in Japanese media.
- Appreciate manga and anime as artistic and cultural properties.
- Understand the nature and purpose of anime/manga fan cultures.
- Be able to recognize manga's functions in subculture, mass culture, and high culture
- Identify texts that are significant to the development and definition of anime
- Determine what makes a particular source significant, and not just 'pop'.
- Recognize themes and motifs of these significant texts in later works.
- Trace styles to specific people and to specific cultural forces.

STUDY MATERIALS:

<Core Readings>

- Drazen, Patrick. *Anime Explosion! The What? Why? & Wow! of Japanese Animation*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2003.
- Clements, Jonathan and Helen McCarthy. *The Anime Encyclopedia*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.
- Poitras, Gilles. *Anime Essentials: Every Thing a Fan Needs to Know*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.
- Allison, Anne. *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Ledoux, Trish. *The Complete Anime Guide: Japanese Animation Film Directory & Resource Guide*. Issaquah, Washington: Tiger Mountain Press, 1997.
- Martinez, D. P., et. al. *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 1998.
- Schodt, Frederik. *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996.
- Schodt, Frederik. *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics*. Japan: Kodansha International, 1983.
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WEBSITES

- *Anime-Seiyuu Info Page*. <<http://www.fanfic.net/~hideaway/seiyuu.htm>>.
- *Anime Web Turnpike*. <<http://www.anipike.com/>>.
- *AnimEigo*. <<http://www.animeigo.com/>>.
- *Books on Anime, Manga, and their place in Japanese culture*. <<http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/books.html>>.
- *DVD Discussion App*. <<http://gormenghast.mit.edu/www/lotr/dvd-app-help.html>>
- *Hitoshi Doi*. <<http://www.tcp.com/doi/>>.
- *Parent's Guide to Anime, A*. <<http://www.abcb.com/parents/>>

Other readings will be mandated in the course materials – these will either be available from the library, or provided for you at the appropriate time.

ASSESSMENT: Students' achievement of the stated course objectives will be measured in terms of their performance in the following three areas:

- (1) essay (70%)
- (2) Class participation (30%)
- (3) *optional* film/book report (+20%).

The component of class participation consists mainly in participating actively in class discussions. In case they wish to gain additional marks for the final grade students have the option of submitting a 1,000 page book report on a work of ethnography by the end of the course or prepare a class presentation (with approved and appropriate materials) of 30 minutes duration on an agreed subject. The report shall be formally marked and may improve the student's final mark by as much as 20%, while the presentation may potentially raise the mark by 25%.

The essay will be on any topic of interest to the student. However, it should be a topic to which the themes, theories and principles of media studies can be appropriately applied. It should be around 3,000 words in length, to be given in two drafts. The first shall be considered a working draft and is to be submitted no later than Week ten. I shall read and make comments on how to improve the draft (but will not give it a mark). Students will submit a second and final draft by the end of the course. The final draft shall be formally marked and will constitute 70% of the student's final mark.



Essay Questions

Please come to see me by the end of week three to agree your essay question. It may be an in-depth review of a series or film cycle, an examination of the history of anime/manga, a biography, a *fully* annotated translation – or anything that tickles your fancy, and for which you can make a sound case (however, in this latter case it MUST be agreed with me in advance).

Pre-approved topics

1: “Who am I?” Discuss the nature of the human/robot relationships in *Metropolis* (Tezuka/Otomo/Rintaro - 2001) – with special reference to the characters of Tima, Det. Shunsaku, Kenichi, Rock, Duke Red and Pero. What is humanity trying to achieve in creating servile beings in its own image, and who is to blame when the robots tire of their servitude?

2: “Review”: Select one of the series of film cycles discussed in the course and write a full review of it, discussing character concepts, visual style, narrative and social content.

3: “Translation”: A full translation of chapters one to five of an agreed manga (not currently available commercially or as a fan-translation) – with annotations and explanations of any cultural, historical and artistic points of note.

4: “Biography”: Taking an agreed manga-ka/actor’s life as the focus, explore the work and philosophies of your chosen meister – with special reference to the ways in which they have advanced their own genres, the discipline as a whole and the way in which the broader world views anime/manga through their work.

5: “Space Opera”: Consider the changes wrought in anime through the influence of Matsumoto Leiji’s operatic epics – *Capt. Harlock*, *Galaxy Express 999* and so forth. From where did Master Leiji gather his influence, and what impact his surreal interpretations have had on the current generation of creators.

6: “Big Freaking Giant Robots”: Explore the Japanese obsession with artificial humanoid characters within anime – with specific reference to the links between such examples as the ‘Gundam’ or ‘Giant Robo’ and the sort of shamanistic devices around which the Japanese native faith has always been constructed.

7: “Punch the Monkey”: Lupin III has existed as a character for over forty years now, constantly being re-imagined as the culture around his little band changes. Chart the artistic and social influences on this gentleman thief, and explore how Monkey Punch keeps his immortal thief fresh by constant renovation.

8: “X-Rated”: Discuss the popularity of Hentai in Japan, a land which seems to be morally rather conservative. What sort of release does this ‘cartoon porn’ provide its legions of basement-dwelling fans?

9: “?”:

POLICIES: All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for this course. Acts of plagiarism or other forms academic dishonesty will be dealt with harshly. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism> for more information. To this end, an electronic copy of the essay will also be collected to check using plagiarism software.

CLASS FORMAT: Each week will be divided into a Lecture and an open seminar session. The lecture will present the main views on each subject area and provide the students with a starting point for their own thought. The follow-up seminar will require the students to discuss and/or make presentations on their understanding of the material.

THE FILMS: *It is the responsibility of each student to make sure that they have seen each film before appointed week, as dictated in the syllabus. Some films will be in the library or the LDIC on DVD format. Other may be rentable commercially. However, all films will be available in an electronic format (either Mp4 or AVI) from my office (please bring along a USB pen, or drive).*

- **NOTE:** All films where possible will be subtitled in English, however in some cases it may only be possible to provide English synopses and in others no language support at all. *Be advised.*
- **NOTE:** Attendance is compulsory: The course is extremely popular, always oversubscribed and places are limited. Failure to attend without good cause will result in failure.



SCHEDULE:

Introduction (Wed, 2nd Sept): Course outline, Group formation and QA.

Part One. Framing Devices in Manga and Anime

<Session 1> - (Fri, 4th Sept and Wed, 9th Sept)

Theme: *The Prehistory of Anime and Manga*

Lecture: Introducing the subject of Manga and anime studies, we will examine both the history of narrative art in various countries throughout the world, coming to rest eventually on the styles which developed in the US and Japan into the ‘comics’ of the 1930s, from which manga and anime ultimately draw their current form.

Screening: A variety of Anime – from the 1920, 30s and 40s. **NOTE: NO SUBTITLES.**

<Session 2> - (Fri, 11th Sept and Wed 16th Sept)

Theme: *Rise of the Robots, Part One: Crush Them Now, Giant Robo!*

Lecture: Looking at the creation of anime and manga of a technological nature this week. Considering what we saw in Session One, we will examine Japan’s fascination with technology and the place which such devices have in Japanese popular art forms.

Screening: ‘Giant Robo’ and ‘Tetsujin 28’.

<Session 3> - (Fri, 18th Sept and Friday 25th Sept)

Theme: *Rise of the Robots, Part Two: Believe in a Sign of Zeta!*

Lecture: Examining the rise of realism in Japanese Robot manga and anime in the 70s. We will examine how the oil shock affected the way in which even manga-ka thought about their heroes and how Yoshiyuki Tomino turned that issue into the, now legendary Mobile Suit Gubdam franchise..

Screening: ‘Mobile Suit Gundam Movie I.

Wed: 30th September. Class is cancelled today

<Session 4> - (Fri, 2nd Oct and Wed 7th Oct)

Theme: *The Magical Girls, Super Teams and Tenti-Porn.*

Lecture: Looking at material from series such as ‘Cutey Honey’ and ‘Tenchimuyo’ and ‘Urotsuki Doji) we will examine a variety of sub-genres in anime and manga – examining the different elements of ‘fan service’ for which these properties cater.

Screening: ‘Cutey Honey’ and ‘Tenchimuyo’.

Part Two: Among Giants: The Gods of Manga.

<Session 5> - (Fri, 9th Oct and Wed 14th Oct)

Theme: *Monkey Punch.*

Lecture: This week we will focus on the work of this radical manga-ka and the ways in which he had attempted to 'push society's buttons' for decades with witty, and often intentionally offensive, material. We will be reading sections of several works in class and you will be expected to complete these readings for the seminar session.

Seminar/Screening: "Cagliostro's Castle".

Wed: 21st October. Class is cancelled today

<Session 7> - (Fri, 23rd Oct and Wed 28th Oct)

Theme: *Miyazaki Hayao.*

Lecture: Before he was the best known Japanese animation director, Miyazaki was one of the best known Japanese manga-ka. In this lecture we will examine sections of his masterpiece 'Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind' and look at its message of natural conservationism.

Seminar/Screening: "Nausicaa".

<Session 8> - (Fri, 30th Oct and Wed 4th Nov)

Theme: *Matsumoto Leiji.*

Lecture: The man who took the Space Opera genre from Western Fiction and recreated it for Japanese manga and anime. We will be examining material from 'Capt. Harlock', 'Galaxy Express 999' and 'Space Battleship Yamato'.

Seminar/Screening: "Arcadia of My Youth".

<Session 9> - (Fri, 6th Nov and Wed 11th Nov)

Theme: *Tezuka Osamu.*

Lecture: The Father of Japanese Anime and Manga. We will examine his life and work, with an eye to his love of classical literature and the potential he saw in technology.

Seminar/Screening: 'Metropolis'

Part Three: A Knight's Dark Dreaming: Rebels and Romantics.

<Session 11> - (Fri, 13th Nov and Wed 18th Nov)

Theme: *Takahashi Rumiko.*

Lecture: Looking at the work of these important women manga-ka, we will examine the rise of feminist thought in Japanese pop-culture and the way that as many men flock to these writers as women.

Seminar/Screening: 'Urusei Yatsura'.

<Session 12> - (Fri, 20th Nov and Wed 25th Nov)

Theme: Otomo Katsuhiro.

Lecture: Looking at the work of the man who made anime sexy. We will examine his early work and his obvious love of surrealism, before moving onto his dystopian tale “Akira”.

Seminar/Screening: ‘Akira’.

<Session 13> - (Fri, 27th Nov and Wed 2nd Dec)

Theme: Azuma Kiyohiko.

Lecture: A recent arrival on the manga circuit, but one whose irreverent take on Japanese modern living (especially at school) has found many fans among the post-bubble generations.

Seminar/Screening: ‘Azumanga Daioh’ Episodes 1-4 (the rest of the series is available for personal viewing should you decide to write a paper on the series).

Wed: 9th December. Class is cancelled today

<Session 14> - (Fri, 11th Dec and Wed 16th Dec)

Theme: Special Christmas Eye Melting Psychosis – *a Selection of anime/live action films which will destroy what is left of your puny little minds before Christmas.*

Friday 11th December – Deadline for essay submission.

