



Tokyo Stories in Contemporary Fiction

JAPA 340 – Spring 2018

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00PM – 4:15PM
Robinson B220

Boasting a population of more than thirteen million people and occupying more than two thousand square meters, Tokyo is one of the largest and most vibrant cities in the world. It's also one of the most storied, laying claim to centuries of history and countless colorful districts and neighborhoods. In this class we will explore Tokyo by delving into a collection of stories set in and around the great metropolis.

During the first half of the semester, we will work our way forward in time beginning with the city's roots as the samurai capital of Edo and ending with the economically depressed "lost decade" preceding the turn of the millennium. During the second half of the semester, we will investigate some of the major themes of 21st century stories, which include demographic crisis, social stratification, gender trouble, and postmodern urban anomie. By the end of the semester, students will have been exposed to a range of representative authors and cultural concerns, and they will thus have developed a nuanced understanding of postwar Japanese history and society. Through class discussions and writing assignments, students will exercise their capacity for critical thinking as they develop a global perspective on issues such as urban subcultures, the inscription of political power onto location, and the challenges and potential of diversity.

Course Attributes: Literature, Non-Western Culture, Undergraduate Upper Division

Instructor

Kathryn Hemmann
khemmann@gmail.com
Aquia Building Room 326
office hours by appointment

Course Texts

All She Was Worth, by Miyuki **Miyabe**
Twinkle Twinkle, by Kaori **Ekuni**
After Dark, by Haruki **Murakami**
Princess Jellyfish Vol. 1, by Akiko **Higashimura**

Grading and Assignments

Participation: 30%
Response Papers: 30%
Final Project: 25%
Final Project Proposal: 15%

Participation

Students are expected to complete all required reading assignments and to be engaged and 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 and the other students. A large number of unexcused absences will also affect a student's participation grade in addition to any accrued penalties to the overall course grade.

Response Papers

There will be three response papers due over the course of the semester. Each response paper should be approximately 650 words (about two pages of twelve-point, double-spaced text). A paper copy must be submitted at the beginning of class on the due date. No digital or late responses will be accepted without a legitimate excuse, which will require appropriate documentation. The due dates are **February 22**, **March 29**, and **April 26**.

The purpose of a response paper is to respond to the course material and class discussion in a thoughtfully considered and carefully structured short essay. A paper can take a position on an argument, expand on a specific aspect of an assigned text, relate the course material to an outside book, film, or other work, or draw an analogy to similar media produced outside of Japan. Alternatively, any of these response papers can take the form of a creative project, such as a parody, an illustration or short comic, an imagined dialog between characters in the form of a short screenplay, a reaction video on YouTube, and so on. The response papers are graded according to a ✓+/✓/✓- system, with three ✓ grades resulting in an "A" on the assignment.

Final Project

The final project may deal with any topic relating to Tokyo in contemporary narrative media, including but not limited to fiction, cinema, graphic novels, anime and drama series, and video games. Topics not addressed in class are welcome, and comparative approaches are encouraged.

Students have two options concerning this project. The first is a six-to-eight-page research paper that draws on a minimum of three academic peer-reviewed sources. The second is a creative project that incorporates the cultural themes and methods of academic inquiry covered over the course of the semester. Although students are encouraged to share their ideas with one another, each student is responsible for his or her own work. Group projects are acceptable only for the creative option. The final project should be emailed to me no later than **4:15pm on Thursday, May 10**. Deadline extensions must be requested in writing by noon on Tuesday, May 8.

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. If you have opted for the creative option, your proposal should describe your artistic medium and the proposed length of your project (in terms of pages, blog posts, canvases, minutes of video, and so on). A formal bibliographic list (preferably in the Chicago style of citation) of **at least three sources** is necessary for both research and creative proposals, and **your proposal will not be accepted without it**. Your proposal should be approximately one page (about 250 words) in length, not including the list of works referenced. A paper copy of your proposal is due at the beginning of class on **Thursday, March 8**. Only one proposal should be submitted for a group project, but it should include the name and role of everyone in the group. This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis, with a "fail" grade resulting from a student's failure to follow the guidelines explained in the preceding paragraph.

Course Policies*Required Readings*

Students are required to complete all assigned readings, and it is recommended that they bring a physical copy of the appropriate reading to class. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase copies of the four assigned books, as each will be closely analyzed in class. Although these books are available at the campus bookstore, they are all currently in print and can be purchased at a discount from Amazon and other online retailers. Please note that all of the novels, especially *All She Was Worth*, will take some time to read. It is recommended that students begin reading at least a week in advance.

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 printouts are fine) **within three days** of your absence. **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) do not count as a valid excuse, even if they are scheduled during our class time. If such a conflict arises, please notify the professor to reschedule the commitment. Showing up to class more than fifteen minutes late will count as an absence.

Technology

Tablets are permitted in their capacity as e-readers, but **laptop computers are absolutely not allowed** without a formal letter from the Office of Disability Services. If I catch you using your smartphone in class, I will mark you down as absent for that class period and lower your participation grade accordingly.

Disability Accommodation

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) has strict guidelines concerning the submission of accommodation requests. If your registered disability enables you to receive a specific accommodation on a class assignment or evaluation, please submit the appropriate paperwork to me in advance of the deadline, which is generally a week before the assignment due date or scheduled evaluation date. If you feel that I am not being properly sensitive to your disability, please let me know, and please don't hesitate to suggest a meeting with your officer at the ODS.

Plagiarism

I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. If you submit work that isn't your own for any assignment for any reason, you will fail the class, and I will report you to the Honor Committee, which may result in your expulsion. Plagiarism is surprisingly easy to catch, so please don't try it.

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 any of these types of discourses in written or oral class assignments will be harshly penalized.

Anime Viewing

The first two episodes of *Durarara!!*, which is assigned for Thursday, April 5, will not be screened, nor is the series available in the library. Instead, students are asked to access the episodes through an online streaming service. Both Hulu and Crunchyroll are free and legal, and both offer the option to watch the show with either English subtitles or an English dub.

Week One: Visualizing and Theorizing Urban Space

Tuesday, January 23

Course Introduction, Course Themes, and Pronunciation Guide

Thursday, January 25

In-class viewing of excerpts from *Your Name* (2016), directed by Makoto Shinkai

Week Two: Fantasies of Old Edo

Tuesday, January 30

Shūhei Fujisawa, "Out of Luck," from *The Bamboo Sword and Other Samurai Tales*, pp.169-184

Thursday, February 1

Aiko Kitahara, "Eight-Tenths a Man," from *The Budding Tree: Six Stories of Love in Edo*, pp.37-58

Week Three: Modern Life in the Modern City

Tuesday, February 6

Kafū Nagai, "The Peony Garden," from *The Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories*, pp.45-51

Thursday, February 8

Yasunari Kawabata, "The Piano Girl," "Sumida Park," "The Bug House," and "The Aquarium," from *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, pp.3-17, 24-39

Week Four: The Soldiers Come Home

Tuesday, February 13

Taiko Hirabayashi, "Blind Chinese Soldiers," from *Japanese Women Writers: Twentieth Century Short Fiction*, pp.41-45

Thursday, February 15

Amy Yamada, "Bedtime Eyes," from *Bedtime Eyes*, pp.1-25

Week Five: Constructing Tokyo, Inc.

Tuesday, February 20

Masako Togawa, "During the Construction Work: Miss Tojo Reflects," from *The Master Key*, pp.11-19

Thursday, February 22

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

☆ RESPONSE PAPER ONE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Week Six: The Boom Years

Tuesday, February 27

Keizō Hino, "Jacob's Tōkyō Ladder," from *Japan: A Traveler's Companion*, pp.1-15

Thursday, March 1

Banana Yoshimoto, "Newlywed," from *Lizard*, pp.1-18

Week Seven: The Bust Years

Tuesday, March 6

Miyuki Miyabe, *All She Was Worth*, Chapters 1-16 (pp.7-168)

Thursday, March 8

Miyuki Miyabe, *All She Was Worth*, Chapters 17-29 (pp.169-296)

☆ FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

* * * SPRING BREAK * * *

March 12 – March 18

Week Eight: How Babies Are (Not) Made

Tuesday, March 20

Kaori Ekuni, *Twinkle Twinkle*, Chapters 1-7 (pp.1-100)

Thursday, March 22

Kaori Ekuni, *Twinkle Twinkle*, Chapters 8-12 (pp.101-170)

Week Nine: Tokyo Gothic

Tuesday, March 27

Takashi Atōda, "Dried Fish and an Electrical Leak," from *The Square Persimmon and Other Stories*, pp.51-66

Thursday, March 29

Yōko Ogawa, "Dormitory," from *The Diving Pool*, pp.107-164

☆ RESPONSE PAPER TWO DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Week Ten: Hooligans and Shenanigans in West Tokyo

Tuesday, April 3

Ishida Ira, "Ikebukuro West Gate Park," from *Digital Geishas and Talking Frogs: The Best 21st Century Short Stories from Japan*, pp.47-90

Thursday, April 5

First two episodes of *Durarara!!* (2010), directed by Takahiro Ōmori

Week Eleven: Underground Ecosystems

Tuesday, April 10

In-class viewing of excerpts from *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (2011), directed by David Gelb

Thursday, April 12

NO CLASS

Week Twelve: Tokyo After Dark

Tuesday, April 17

Haruki Murakami, *After Dark*, Chapters 1-9 (pp.1-128)

Thursday, April 19

Haruki Murakami, *After Dark*, Chapters 10-18 (pp.129-244)

Week Thirteen: High City Decadence

Tuesday, April 24

Novala Takemoto, "Missin'," from *Missin'*, pp.73-111

Thursday, April 26

Akiko Higashimura, *Princess Jellyfish* Vol. 1

☆ RESPONSE PAPER THREE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Week Fourteen: Speculative Fantasies

Tuesday, May 1

Mariko Ohara, "Girl," from *Monkey Brain Sushi*, pp.261-278

Thursday, May 3

Hiromi Kawakami, "Mogera Wogura," from *Speculative Japan: Outstanding Tales of Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy*, pp.235-251

**FINAL PROJECT MUST BE SUBMITTED BY
4:15PM on THURSDAY, MAY 10**

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