



Animals and Nature in Japanese Culture

JAPA 310 – Spring 2018

Tuesday and Thursday, 4:30PM – 5:45PM

Thompson Hall 2022

Japan is known throughout the world for its beautiful scenery, and many people associate the country with the cherry blossoms adorning promotional brochures and the cute animals that populate the internet. What are the attitudes and beliefs expressed by Japanese culture toward animals and nature? Moreover, how do people in Japan coexist with an environment that is so frequently responsible for devastating natural disasters?

This course serves as an introduction to ecocriticism through the lens of Japanese culture from the late medieval period to the present day. Themes relating to the study of the natural world will be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective, and the course will address topics concerning Japanese history, religion, and folklore. Students will learn to identify and analyze ecological themes in current events, social issues, and texts drawn from popular culture, including anime and manga. By the end of the semester, students will possess a nuanced and balanced understanding of contemporary Japan, as well as a greater appreciation for both cultural differences and the global connections that guide ideas and practices relating to humanity's relationship with the natural world and our roles and responsibilities in shaping the environment.

All readings, lectures, and discussions will be in English. No prior knowledge or study of Japan or the Japanese language is necessary.

Course Attributes:

Global Understanding Core Requirement, Non-Western Culture, Undergraduate Upper Division

Instructor Information

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

Required Course Texts

Japan at Nature's Edge, edited by Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker
Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure, by Hideo Furukawa
Pluto: Tezuka x Urasawa Vol. 1, by Naoki Urasawa
Tropic of the Sea, by Satoshi Kon
Girl from the Other Side, by Nagabe

Grading

Class Participation: 20%
Class Presentation: 10%
Response Papers: 30%
Final Project Proposal: 10%
Final Project Presentation: 10%
Final Project: 20%

Class Participation

Students are expected to complete all required reading assignments and to be engaged and attentive during class lectures, presentations, 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.

Class Presentation

Students will be asked to present on one of the class readings in groups of two or three. This presentation will be approximately ten to fifteen minutes in length and will take the form of a summary of the chosen reading. If your group is presenting on one of the academic essays, this summary will include (1) an introduction to the topic, (2) a clear statement of the author's main argument, (3) an overview of the evidence the author provides, and (4) two or three discussion questions for the class. If your group is presenting on an artistic work, this summary will include (1) an introduction to the topic, (2) a clear statement of the artist's main themes, (3) an overview of the plot and its narrative progression, and (4) two or three discussion questions for the class. Each person in the pair or group is required to speak during the presentation. Printouts and visual aids are welcome but not necessary.

Response Papers

There will be three response papers due over the course of the semester. Each response paper should be approximately 600 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 response can take a position on an argument, expand on a specific aspect of an assigned text, or relate the course material to the culture or current events pertaining to the United States or another country or global region. Alternatively, any of these response papers can take the form of a creative project, such as an illustration or short comic, a collage of images, a short story or nonfiction creative essay, 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 covered in class or with any topic related to the themes of the class. The range of acceptable topics is quite broad and flexible; but, generally speaking, your final project must be related to Japan and the natural world in some way. Comparative approaches are encouraged, but it is usually wise to narrow your focus as much as possible.

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 **5:45pm on Tuesday, May 15.** No physical copies will be accepted, and **no deadline extensions will be granted.**

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.

Final Project Presentation

During the final week of class, each student will be asked to give a presentation on the topic of their final project. Individual presentations will be five minutes in length, and group presentations will be longer in accordance to the size of the group and the nature of the project. These presentations will be graded according to a four-point rubric: (1) clarity, or ability to convey content, (2) impact, or ability to demonstrate why the project is interesting and important, (3) appropriate use of visual aids, and (4) ability to handle questions and comments. Plan on using a PowerPoint slideshow or some other type of visual aid, but try not to include more than 30 to 45 seconds of video.

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. A digital version of the academic essay collection will be made available, but students are strongly encouraged to purchase copies of the other 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.

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.



Week One: Course Introduction

Tuesday, January 23

Course Introduction, Themes, and Learning Goals

Thursday, January 25

In-class viewing of excerpts from *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), directed by Hayao Miyazaki

Week Two: Theoretical Ecocriticism

Tuesday, January 30

Peter Barry, "Ecocriticism," from *Beginning Theory*, pp.239-261

Thursday, February 1

Vandana Shiva, "Reductionism and Regeneration: A Crisis in Science," from *Ecofeminism*, pp.22-35

UNIT ONE: ECOLOGICAL HISTORY

Week Three: Nature and Culture

Tuesday, February 6

Philip C. Brown, "Constructing Nature," from *Japan at Nature's Edge*, pp.90-114

Thursday, February 8

Brigitte Steger, "Solidarity and Distinction through Practices of Cleanliness in Tsunami Evacuation Shelters in Yamada, Iwate Prefecture," from *Japan Copes with Calamity*, pp.53-75

Week Four: Humans and Animals

Tuesday, February 13

Brett L. Walker, "Wolf Extinction Theories and the Birth of Japan's Discipline of Ecology," from *The Lost Wolves of Japan*, pp.184-221

Thursday, February 15

Jakobina Arch, "From Meat to Machine Oil: The Nineteenth-Century Development of Whaling in Wakayama," from *Japan at Nature's Edge*, pp.39-55

Week Five: Nature in Urban Spaces

Tuesday, February 20

Noritaka Yagasaki and Yasuko Nakamura, "The Role of Local Groups in the Protection of Urban Farming and Farmland in Tokyo," from *Local Environmental Movements*, pp.131-144

Thursday, February 22

Christine L. Marran, "Animal Histories: Stranger in a Tokyo Canal," from *Japan at Nature's Edge*, pp.175-185

☆ RESPONSE PAPER ONE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

UNIT TWO: RELIGION AND BIOETHICS

Week Six: Animism and Humanism

Tuesday, February 27

Ian Reader, "Unifying Traditions, Cosmological Perspectives, and the Vitalistic Universe," from *Religion in Contemporary Japan*, pp.22-54

Thursday, March 1

Barbara R. Ambros, "Vengeful Spirits or Loving Spiritual Companions?: Changing Views of Pet Spirits," from *Bones of Contention*, pp.156-185

Week Seven: Human Animals

Tuesday, March 6

Helen Hardacre, "The Practice of *Mizuko Kuyō* and the Changing Nature of Abortion," from *Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan*, pp.55-100

Thursday, March 8

Margaret Lock, "Hybrid Selves and the Calculation of Death in Japan and North America," from *Beyond Joseph Needham: Science, Technology, and Medicine in East and Southeast Asia*, pp.410-426

☆ FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

* * * SPRING BREAK * * *

March 12 – March 18

UNIT THREE: FOLKLORE AND NOSTALGIA

Week Eight: Animals in Folklore

Tuesday, March 20

Haruo Shirane and Burton Watson, selections from *The Demon at Agi Bridge*

Thursday, March 22

Michael Dylan Foster, "Natural History of the Weird: Encyclopedias, Spooky Stories, and the Bestiaries of Toriyama Sekien," from *Pandemonium and Parade*, pp.30-76

Week Nine: Nostalgia Trips

Tuesday, March 27

Alex Kerr, "Environment: Cedar Plantations and Orange Ooze," from *Dogs and Demons*, pp.51-76

Thursday, March 29

Satoshi Kon, *Tropic of the Sea*

☆ RESPONSE PAPER TWO DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

UNIT FOUR: ART AND NATURE

Week Ten: Writing Disaster

Tuesday, April 3

Hideo Furukawa, *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure*, pp.1-66

Thursday, April 5

Hideo Furukawa, *Horses, Horses, in the End the Light Remains Pure*, pp.66-140

Week Eleven: Speculative Posthumanism

Tuesday, April 10

Naoki Urasawa, *Pluto: Tezuka x Urasawa* Vol. 1

Thursday, April 12

NO CLASS

Week Twelve: Walking Alongside Animals

Tuesday, April 17

Melek Ortabasi, "Fictional Fantasy or Historical Fact? The Search for Japanese Identity in Miyazaki Hayao's *Mononokehime*," from *A Century of Popular Culture in Japan*, pp.199-228

Thursday, April 19

Hiromi Kawakami, "God Bless You, 2011," from *March Was Made of Yarn*, pp.37-53

Week Thirteen: Longing for the Nonhuman

Tuesday, April 24

Joseph Laycock, "'We Are Spirits of Another Sort': Ontological Rebellion and Religious Dimension of the Otherkin Community," from *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 15:3, pp.65-90

Thursday, April 26

Nagabe, *Girl from the Other Side*

☆ RESPONSE PAPER THREE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Week Fourteen: Student Presentations

Tuesday, May 1

Thursday, May 3

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**FINAL PROJECT MUST BE SUBMITTED BY
5:45PM on TUESDAY, MAY 15**

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