



Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy

JAPA 340 – Spring 2020

Tuesday and Thursday, 4:30PM – 5:45PM

Enterprise Hall 275

This course will provide an overview of the major tropes, themes, 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, high fantasy, apocalypse, dystopia, magical realism, posthumanism, video games, and transnational media franchises and cross-cultural marketing.

On Tuesdays we will situate representative works and writers within a broader context while making comparisons with stories told in different cultures and in different media formats. Thursday classes will focus on close readings, discussions, and in-class writing assignments. This course is designed to help 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, which will be fostered by prompts based on the course texts.

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
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Aquia Building Room 326
office hours by appointment

Course Texts

The Memory Police, by Yoko Ogawa
The Ancient Magus' Bride, Vol. 1, by Kore Yamazaki
Log Horizon, Vol. 1: The Beginning of Another World, by Mamare Touno
All You Need Is Kill, by Hiroshi Sakurazaka
Land of the Lustrous, Vol. 1, by Haruko Ichikawa
Monstress, Vol. 1: Awakening, by Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda

Grading and Assignments

Participation: 25%
Four Responses: 40%
Final Project: 25%
Final Project Proposal: 10%

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, speaks at least once or twice during each class.
- B – Fair participation, speaks perhaps once or twice a week.
- C – Minimal participation, does not speak but attends class.
- D – Poor participation, does not speak or attend class regularly.
- F – No participation, frequently does not attend class.

Five Responses

There will be four response assignments due over the course of the semester. The due dates are **February 6, February 27, April 2, and April 23**. A response can be either analytical or creative. Analytical responses should take the form of papers of roughly 500 to 600 words (two or three paragraphs) responding to the reading assigned since the due date of the last response. Creative responses should also respond to the themes and discussions of the previous class periods.

Expansions of in-class creative writing prompts are strongly encouraged, and they should be between 400 and 700 words in length. Other types of creative responses are welcome, but they will be graded on the basis of artistic skill and must be entirely the work of the student. Creative responses that are not self-explanatory should be accompanied by a short artist's statement of roughly 100 words.

All responses will be graded on a ✓+ / ✓ / ✓- basis, and they should be printed out and turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. If your response cannot be printed (in the case of a video, for instance), it should be emailed in advance of class on the due date. Deadline extensions must be requested via email in advance of the due date.

Final Project

Students have two options concerning the final project. The first option is a six-to-eight-page research paper that draws on a minimum of three academic peer-reviewed sources. Your paper may address any topic relating to Japanese fantasy and science fiction, including but not limited to novels, short stories, movies, graphic novels, anime series, visual novels, music videos, and video games. Topics not addressed in class and comparative approaches are welcome, but your project must relate to Japan in some way.

The second option is a creative project that explores the themes covered during the semester. Students are encouraged to expand any of the in-class writing prompts into a full short story of 2,000 to 2,500 words (roughly five to six single-spaced pages). An original science fiction or fantasy story will be accepted if the student is able to demonstrate how it relates to the course themes in their project proposal.

Creative work in media other than prose fiction is permissible if it relates to the course themes, but such creative projects will be graded on the basis of skill and originality and **are not recommended** for students with limited experience in their chosen artistic medium. For the purpose of this assignment, PowerPoint presentations are not considered an "artistic medium" and will not be accepted in place of a paper. Edible projects will only be accepted if the student has a minimum of three years of experience in paid positions in a relevant industry and is willing and able to make enough food to share with the class during the final week 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 not allowed for the research paper option, and group projects will only be allowed for the creative option in exceptional cases (such as small game development teams, for instance). **The final project should be emailed to me by 7:15pm on Tuesday, May 12.** Deadline extensions must be requested in writing by the end of the day on Sunday, May 10.

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 and how you will approach your topic. If you opt for a creative project, your proposal should state your artistic medium, provide at least one theme you wish to explore through your work, and specify the proposed length of your project (in terms of pages, blog posts, canvases, minutes of video, and so on). No matter what form your project takes, you are required to include a formal bibliographic list of at least three secondary sources (using whatever citation style you're most comfortable with). 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 5**.

This assignment will be graded on a sufficient/insufficient basis, with an "insufficient" grade resulting from a failure to follow the guidelines explained in the preceding paragraph. Students who receive an "insufficient" will be required to submit a revised proposal by Sunday, March 15.

Course Policies

Required Readings

Students must purchase (or otherwise acquire) the six books required for this class, but all of the short stories will be available on the course site on Blackboard. Students are required to complete all assigned readings. You are strongly encouraged to bring physical copies of the readings to class. Please note that the three novels, as well as the graphic novel *Monstress*, will take some time to read. It is recommended that you begin reading each novel at least a week in advance. All viewing assignments will be completed during the designated class time.

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). 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 or study sessions) 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 **smartphones and laptop computers are absolutely not allowed** without a formal letter from the Office of Disability Services. If you use your smartphone or laptop in class, you will be asked to leave and will be marked as absent. Any student expecting an urgent call or text message should notify me before class begins.

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 this 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. You are 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.

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 assignments or class discussions will be penalized.

Content Warnings

As many of the assigned readings contain content suitable only for mature readers, students should be aware that we will encounter violent and graphic imagery. I will try to warn for such content in advance, but students should note that they will be responsible for alerting me to any specific triggers or other concerns. Disagreement with the way these themes are handled in the text is welcome, but any concerns about the class itself should be addressed privately in person or via email so that I can respond to them in a sensitive and productive manner.

Week One: Introduction to Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Japan

Tuesday, January 21
Thursday, January 23

Susan Napier, "Introduction," from *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity*, pp.1-20

Week Two: Fantasy and Folklore

Tuesday, January 28
Thursday, January 30

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

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

Week Three: Robots and Monsters

Tuesday, February 4
Thursday, February 6 (**Response #1 Due Today**)

Frederik L. Schodt, "A National Icon," from *The Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, Manga/Anime Revolution*, pp.3-15

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

Week Four: Postwar Japanese Science Fiction

Tuesday, February 11
Thursday, February 13

Sakyo Komatsu, "The Japan Trench," from *Japan Sinks*, pp.1-26

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

Week Five: Postapocalyptic Science Fiction

Tuesday, February 18
Thursday, February 20

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

Week Six: Swords and Sorcery

Tuesday, February 25

Thursday, February 27 (**Response #2 Due Today**)

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

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

Week Seven: Slipstream Fiction

Tuesday, March 3

Thursday, March 5 (**Final Project Proposal Due Today**)

Haruki Murakami, "Super-Frog Saves Tokyo," from *After the Quake*, pp.91-114

Hiromi Kawakami, *Summer Break*

* * * SPRING BREAK * * *

Monday, March 9 – Sunday, March 15

Week Eight: Dystopian Social Horror

Tuesday, March 17

Thursday, March 19

Yoko Ogawa, *The Memory Police*

Week Nine: Other Worlds

Tuesday, March 24

Thursday, March 26

Mamare Touno, *Log Horizon, Vol. 1: The Beginning of Another World*

Week Ten: Posthuman Science Fiction

Tuesday, March 31

Thursday, April 2 (**Response #3 Due Today**)

Haruko Ichikawa, *Land of the Lustrous*, Vol. 1

Week Eleven: Urban Fantasy

Tuesday, April 7

Thursday, April 9

Kore Yamazaki, *The Ancient Magus' Bride*, Vol. 1

Week Twelve: Video Games

Tuesday, April 14

Thursday, April 16

Jun Eishima, "A Much Too Silent Sea," from *Nier Automata: Short Story Long*, pp.165-184

Miyuki Miyabe, "As the Priest Says," from *Ico: Castle in the Mist*, pp.11-63

Week Thirteen: Transnational Multimedia

Tuesday, April 21

Thursday, April 23 (**Response #4 Due Today**)

Hiroshi Sakurazaka, *All You Need Is Kill*

Week Fourteen: Global Imagination

Tuesday, April 28

Thursday, April 30

Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda, *Monstress, Vol. 1: Awakening*

FINAL PROJECT TO BE SUBMITTED BY

7:15PM on TUESDAY, MAY 12