



## **Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy**

EALC 261 – Spring 2022

Monday and Wednesday, 3:30PM – 5:00PM  
Williams Hall, Room 23

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, urban fantasy, and transnational media franchises and cross-cultural marketing.

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. The course lectures will situate representative works and writers within a broader context while making comparisons with stories told in different cultures and in different media formats. Class discussions will provide an opportunity for close readings, creative writing, and considerations of animated and cinematic adaptations.

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  
khemmann@gmail.com  
Office hours by appointment via Zoom

## **Course Texts**

*Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, Vol. 1*, by Hayao Miyazaki  
*The Memory Police*, by Yoko Ogawa  
*All You Need Is Kill*, by Hiroshi Sakurazaka  
*Log Horizon, Vol. 1: The Beginning of Another World*, by Mamare Touno  
*Land of the Lustrous, Vol. 1*, by Haruko Ichikawa  
*The Ancient Magus' Bride, Vol. 1*, by Kore Yamazaki

## **Grading and Assignments**

Participation: 30%  
Three Short Papers: 30%  
Final Project: 25%  
Final Project Proposal: 15%

### *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, contributes at least once or twice during each class.
- B – Fair participation, contributes once or twice a week.
- C – Minimal participation, does not contribute but attends class.
- D – Poor participation, does not contribute or attend class regularly.
- F – No participation, demonstrates disrespect and frequently does not attend class.

### *Three Short Papers*

There will be three short papers due over the course of the semester. The due dates are **February 9**, **March 16**, and **April 13**. A short paper can be either analytical or creative. Analytical papers should be roughly 800 to 1,000 words (four or five paragraphs) and should respond to the reading assigned since the due date of the last response. Creative writing responses should also respond to the themes and discussions of the previous class periods, and they should be roughly the same length as analytical papers, with some allowance for higher or lower wordcounts.

### *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 five secondary 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. An original science fiction or fantasy story of 2,000 to 2,500 words (roughly five to six single-spaced pages) is permissible 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.

### *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 wordcount, 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 five 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 **Wednesday, March 2**.

### **Course Policies**

#### *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, labs, or study sessions) do not count as a valid excuse.

### *Technology*

Tablets are permitted in their capacity as e-readers, but **smartphones and laptop computers are absolutely not allowed** without a formal letter from 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*

I'm happy to grant reasonable deadline extensions to anyone who asks regardless of a formal declaration of disability. Just be sure to send me a request in writing so that I have a means of following up with you about the assignment.

### *Plagiarism*

I have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism is surprisingly easy to catch, so please don't try it. You're primarily 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 generalizations and stereotypes in class discussions and written assignments 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: A Brief Introduction to Japan**

Wednesday, January 12

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

**Week Two: Overview of Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy**

Monday, January 17

MLK Day holiday, **no class meeting**.

Wednesday, January 19

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

**Week Three: Folklore and Fairy Tales**

Monday, January 24

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

Wednesday, January 26

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

**Week Four: Robots and Monsters**

Monday, January 31

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

Wednesday, February 2

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

**Week Five: Postwar Japanese Science Fiction**

Monday, February 7

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

Wednesday, February 9

Sakyo Komatsu, "The Japan Trench," from *Japan Sinks*, pp.1-26  
+ **Short Paper #1 Due Today**

**Week Six: Postapocalyptic Science Fiction**

Monday, February 14

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

Wednesday, February 16

Susan Napier, "Nausicaä and the Feminine Principle," from *Miyazakiworld*, pp.70-85

**Week Seven: Swords and Sorcery**

Monday, February 21

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

Wednesday, February 23

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

**Week Eight: Magical Realism and Slipstream Fiction**

Monday, February 28

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

Alex Bates, "Catfish, Super Frog, and the End of the World," from *Natural Disasters in Asia*, pp.13-19

Wednesday, March 2

Hiromi Kawakami, "Summer Break," from *The God of Bears*

+ **Final Project Proposal Due Today**

\* \* \* **SPRING BREAK** \* \* \*

Monday, March 7 – Sunday, March 13

**Week Nine: Dystopian Social Horror**

Monday, March 14

Wednesday, March 16

+ **Short Paper #2 Due Today**

Yoko Ogawa, *The Memory Police*

**Week Ten: Magical Girls**

Monday, March 21

*Sailor Moon* (1992), Episode Eight, "The Girl Genius Is a Monster: The Brainwashing Cram School of Horror"

Wednesday, March 23

*Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (2011), Episode Ten, "I Won't Rely on Anyone Anymore"

**Week Eleven: Escape to Another World**

Monday, March 28  
Wednesday, March 30

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

**Week Twelve: Posthuman Science Fiction**

Monday, April 4  
Jun Eishima, "A Much Too Silent Sea," from *Nier Automata: Short Story Long*, pp.165-184

Wednesday, April 6  
Haruko Ichikawa, *Land of the Lustrous*, Vol. 1

**Week Thirteen: Global Multimedia**

Monday, April 11  
Hiroshi Sakurazawa, *All You Need Is Kill*

Wednesday, April 13  
*Edge of Tomorrow* (2014)  
+ **Short Paper #3 Due Today**

**Week Fourteen: Urban Fantasy**

Monday, April 18  
Kore Yamazaki, *The Ancient Magus' Bride*, Vol. 1

Wednesday, April 20  
Ananth Hirsh and Yuko Ota, *Barbarous*, Chapter 1

**Week Fifteen: TBA based on student interest**

Monday, April 25  
Wednesday, April 27

**Final Project due on TUESDAY, MAY 10**

Please submit your work via email by the end of the calendar date.