

Japanese Ghost Stories

Grading and Assignments

Participation: 20%
Four Quizzes: 20%
Two Short Responses: 20%
Final Presentation: 20%
Final Presentation Proposal: 10%
Short Creative Project: 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 your 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.

Four Quizzes

A short quiz will be given at the beginning of class on the following days:

Wednesday, September 21
Wednesday, October 5
Wednesday, October 19
Wednesday, November 2

Each quiz will consist of five or six short answer questions. Most of these questions will be related to the plots and themes of the assigned course readings, but some may be more subjective and creative. Uncommon names of characters and settings will be glossed, so there's no need to study or memorize the minutia of the texts. These quizzes are designed to be fun and easy, and the best way to prepare for them is to do the reading.

If you miss a quiz, you can take a digital version at home, but only if you have a formally excused absence. A make-up quiz must be submitted within a week of its original due date.

Two Short Responses

There will be two short written responses due via email by the end of the following days:

Wednesday, September 28

Wednesday, November 16

A short response can be either analytical or creative. Analytical responses should be roughly 800 to 1,000 words (four or five paragraphs), and they should discuss the course texts or engage with the class discussions. Creative responses (such as short stories or autobiographical essays) should be related to the themes of the readings or class discussions, and they should be roughly the same length as analytical papers, with some allowance for higher or lower wordcounts.

No secondary research or list of referenced works is necessary for these responses, which are intended to be low-pressure assignments that will be graded on the student's good-faith effort to engage with the themes of the course. A list of prompts will be distributed in advance of the due date, but students can write about anything they wish.

Final Presentation

During the final week of the semester, each student will give an individual presentation about a research topic of their choice. This presentation should be seven to ten minutes long and include a slideshow. The presentation topic should relate to Japan and the supernatural in some way, but it is otherwise open to the student's choice and interest.

Sample topics include horror fiction, horror movies, horror games, urban legends, internet lore, ghost sightings, haunted places, and so on. Students are strongly encouraged to take an analytical approach that elucidates themes and cultural context instead of merely reporting "facts." The goal of this presentation is not only to introduce the class to the topic, but also to explain why it's interesting and important.

It is not strictly necessary for the final presentation to be nonfiction. To give an example, I am willing to suspend my disbelief if a student wishes to present a short lecture on an entirely imagined lost manuscript that was never published because it was cursed or haunted. That being said, even "fake" facts need to reflect the themes and issues covered in the course material.

This presentation will be graded according to a five-point rubric:

- Relevance to the themes of the course.
- Impact of information, which should be clear and specific.
- Structure, which should be cohesive and well-organized.
- Appealing presentation of attractive and relevant visual aids.
- Succinctness, meaning that the presentation should fit within the time frame.

It's important to note that **there is no final paper, just a final presentation.**

Final Project Proposal

A digital copy of your final presentation proposal is due via email by the end of the day on **Wednesday, November 9**.

The goal of this proposal is to explain the questions and issues you wish to explore in your final project. Your proposal should contain a thesis statement, a brief outline of the structure of your argument, and how you will approach your topic. If you opt for a more creative presentation, you should explain the specifics of what you intend to do.

No matter what form your project takes, you are required to include a formal bibliographic list of **at least five secondary sources**. Your list of works referenced can be formatted according to whatever citation style you choose. These sources do not have to be formal academic peer-reviewed books or articles, but they should be substantial nonfiction essays. Video essays and podcast episodes are acceptable, but at least two sources should be written text. If you are referencing something not written or recorded in English, please provide a translation of the title.

Your proposal should be approximately one page (about 250 words) in length, not including the list of works referenced.

This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis. If your topic is too broad or not relevant to the course, you will be asked to revise and resubmit your proposal. The same applies to proposals with an insufficient or improperly formatted list of works referenced.

Short Creative Project

Each student is required to write one original ghost story or urban legend of approximately 300 to 800 words in length.

By “original,” I mean that your telling should be your own, even if you are recounting a well-known story, something that someone told you, or creepypasta you found online. Within reason, there is no upper limit on the wordcount or number of stories you submit. Artwork is welcome and encouraged, regardless of skill level, and found images can be used with proper attribution.

The material submitted for this assignment will be collected, physically printed, and distributed to the class as a zine, which is a small and informal publication. Because the zine will be a physical object, work that cannot be printed (such as music or video) will not be accepted. Students are discouraged from submitting work that includes intensely disturbing imagery or discloses private personal details. I have no interest in censoring anyone’s creative expression, however, so please use your best judgment.

This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis based on good-faith effort. I cannot offer extra credit if you submit truly brilliant or spooky work, but I will appreciate you nonetheless.

In order to ensure that the zine is printed on time, it’s important that a digital copy of all work is submitted by email no later than the end of the due date on **Wednesday, October 12**.