



Japanese Ghost Stories

EALC 3252 – Fall 2022

Monday and Wednesday, 3:30PM – 5:00PM

Williams Hall, Room TBA

This course offers a survey of the numinous and supernatural through Japanese fiction, drama, comics, animation, and video games from the Heian period to the present day. Students will assemble a foundational knowledge of Japanese religion and folklore while studying popular narrative traditions representative of their historical eras.

By peering into the liminal spaces connecting the living with the dead, students will develop critical thinking and media literacy through careful investigation into the matters that people of different times and places have perceived as monstrous, alien, and unspeakable. Issues of gender, sexuality, and ethnic minority status will receive special attention as we navigate theories relating to the cultural role and social relevance of ghosts. By the end of the semester, students will possess a broad perspective on Japanese narrative traditions and popular culture, as well as an understanding of how fantastic stories of the dead reflect the tangible experiences of the living.

Instructor

Dr. Kathryn Hemmann
khemmann@gmail.com
Office hours by appointment

Course Texts

Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter, by Cecile Brun and Olivier Pichard
Summer, Fireworks, and My Corpse, by Otsuichi
Ring, by Koji Suzuki
Fragments of Horror, by Junji Ito
Sadako at the End of the World, by Koma Natsumi

Grading and Assignments

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

The specifics of each assignment will be provided on a separate handout.

Assignment Due Dates (always on a Wednesday)

Quizzes: September 21 + October 5 + October 19 + November 2
Short Responses: September 28 + November 16
Creative Project: October 12
Presentation Proposal: November 9

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, and study sessions) do not count as a valid excuse.

Technology

Tablets are permitted in their capacity as e-readers, but **smartphones and laptops 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 you will be marked as absent. Any student expecting an urgent call or message should notify me before class begins.

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. There should be no need for you to submit work that is not your own.

Disability Accommodation

I'm happy to grant deadline extensions and accommodations to anyone who asks regardless of an official declaration of disability. Please feel free to request whatever you need, and please know that it's not necessary to share private or personal information with me. Still, please be sure to send a request in writing via email so that I have a means of following up with you if necessary.

Content Warnings

With the exception of Junji Ito's manga anthology *Fragments of Horror* and certain scenes in Koji Suzuki's novel *Ring*, the course material does not feature graphic depictions of violence or sexuality. Nevertheless, this is a class about horror and dark fantasy, so certain elements of the course texts may be upsetting and disturbing. I will do my best to accommodate individual student requests for specific content warnings. Please don't hesitate to ask!

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.

The banner graphic used for this course was created by **Aki Yehuo**, whose work can be found at <https://aki-yehuo.artstation.com> + https://twitter.com/Aki_Yehuo

Week One: Course Orientation

Wednesday, August 31

No assigned reading, but please familiarize yourself with the syllabus

Week Two: Contemporary Urban Legends

Monday, September 5

Labor Day holiday, no class meeting

Wednesday, September 7

Michael Dylan Foster, "The Question of the Slit-Mouthed Woman: Contemporary Legend, the Beauty Industry, and Women's Weekly Magazines in Japan"

Week Three: Folklore and Folktales

Monday, September 12

Royall Tyler, "Haunts," from *Japanese Tales*

Lafcadio Hearn, "Furisode," from *In Ghostly Japan*

Lafcadio Hearn, "The Story of Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi," from *Kwaidan*

Wednesday, September 14

Michelle Osterfeld Li, "Animal Spirits," from *Ambiguous Bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setsuwa Tales*

Week Four: Lingerinɡ Twilight

Monday, September 19

Murasaki Shikibu, "Yūgao: The Twilight Beauty," from *The Tale of Genji*

Wednesday, September 21

Doris G. Barga, "Spirit Possession in The Context of Dramatic Expressions of Gender Conflict: The Aoi Episode of The *Genji monogatari*"

+ Quiz #1

Week Five: Drifting Between Realms

Monday, September 26

William LaFleur, "Zeami's Buddhism: Cosmology and Dialectic in Nō Drama," from *The Karma of Words*

Wednesday, September 28

Zeami Motokiyo, "Atsumori," from *Japanese Nō Dramas*

Zeami Motokiyo, "Izutsu: The Well-Cradle," from *Japanese Nō Dramas*

+ Short Response #1

Week Six: The Aesthetic of Cruelty

Monday, October 3

Akinari Ueda, "The Reed-Choked House," from *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*

Brenda Jordan, "Yūrei: Tales of Female Ghosts," from *Japanese Ghosts & Demons*

Wednesday, October 5

Tsuruya Nanboku IV and Matsui Kozō II, "Kasane," from *Masterpieces of Kabuki*

+ Quiz #2

Week Seven: Yōkai Studies

Monday, October 10

Michael Dylan Foster, "Countryside" and "Village and City," from *The Book of Yōkai*

Wednesday, October 12

Gerald Figal, "Modern Science and the Folk," from *Civilization and Monsters*

+ Short Creative Project

Week Eight: Ghostly Tourism

Monday, October 17

Marilyn Ivy, "Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore," from *Discourses of the Vanishing*

Wednesday, October 19

Cecile Brun and Olivier Pichard, *Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter*

+ Quiz #3

Week Nine: Into the Woods

Monday, October 24

Roger Luckhurst, "Forest," from *Gothic: An Illustrated History*

Lindsay Nelson, "The Haunted Forest: Circulating Aokigahara," from *Circulating Fear*

Wednesday, October 26

Otsuichi, *Summer, Fireworks, and My Corpse*

Week Ten: The Girl in the Well

Monday, October 31

Koji Suzuki, *Ring*

Wednesday, November 2

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," from *The Uncanny*

+ Quiz #4

Week Eleven: Modern Cautionary Tales

Monday, November 7

Junji Ito, *Fragments of Horror*

Wednesday, November 9

Another, Episodes 1, 2, and 3

<https://crunchyroll.com/series/GR09X52WR/another>

+ Research Presentation Proposal

Week Twelve: The Digital Gothic

Monday, November 14

Keza MacDonald, “Where *Dark Souls* Came FROM: An Origin Story” and “Tough Love: On *Dark Souls*’ Difficulty,” from *You Died: The Dark Souls Companion*

Daniel Johnson, “Networked Asymmetry: Uncanny Traces in the *Dark Souls* Series,” from *Japanese Role-Playing Games*

Wednesday, November 16

Julie Muncy, “The Mysterious Japanese Game That Took 14 Years to Officially Come Out”

<https://www.wired.com/story/yume-nikki-japanese-game-that-took-14-years-to-officially-come-out/>

Eve McLachlan, “And You Were There: Loneliness and Community in *Yume Nikki*”

<https://kritiqal.com/articles/loneliness-and-community-in-yume-nikki>

+ Short Response #2

Thanksgiving Break

Monday, November 21

Wednesday, November 23

Week Thirteen: The Gentle Horror of Everyday Life

Monday, November 28

Aoko Matsuda, “Smartening Up” and “Quite a Catch,” from *Where the Wild Ladies Are*

Wednesday, November 30

Koma Natsumi, *Sadako at the End of the World*

Week Fourteen: Student Research Presentations

Monday, December 5

Wednesday, December 7