ENGL 2398/ENGL 4391/ASTA 3920: Short Fiction and Film of the Postwar Era

Description: The postwar era in Japan (1945 to the present) has been one of remarkable change. This course looks at a selection of short prose fiction and cinema in order to interrogate the relationship between cultural production and socio-political development. In doing so, we will trace the emergence of anxieties particular to late 20th and 21st century Japanese society. Themes to be addressed include, identity during the Occupation (1945-1952) and power relations vis-à-vis the World, economic growth and the rise of hyper-consumption, techno-anxiety, Japan’s wartime past and cultural memory vis-à-vis the rest of Asia, youth and elderly demographic changes, the shifting notions of gender and family, and the emergence of Japan as a post-industrial society. The format of the course is subdivided into five smaller historically segmented sections. Each section will include two lectures, two discussions, one film, and four short pieces of reading. We might also consider taking a short trip to a museum one day in place of a lecture.

Texts: Contemporary Japanese Literature: An Anthology of Fiction, Film, and Other Writings since 1945 (Howard Hibbitt, ed.) (NY: Knopf, 1977)

Handouts

Objectives:

- Become familiar with some of the important writers and narratives of the last 60 years in Japan
- Understand the relationship between Japanese cultural production in the forms of the short story and cinema on the one hand, and geopolitics, technology, nationalism, gender, and historical consciousness on the other hand
- Come to understand some of the conditions that influence and are influenced by Japanese literary and cinematic production today

Expectations: Besides reading all of the texts and watching all of the films, you will be expected to accomplish the following:

- Participate in discussions 8 x 3%
- Give 5 min. presentation on 2 stories 2 x 10%
- Write one, three-page film analysis 1 x 15.5%*
- Write one, three-page story analysis 1 x 15.5%*
- Take Final (Quote Identification) 1 x 25%#

* If you are taking the course above the 2000-level you will be required to turn in five-page writing assignments. However, if you are taking the Honors Option (HO), you will have to submit double the number of pages for one of the writing assignments (ie., ENGL 2398HO students will turn in one paper that is 3-pages and another that is 6; ENGL 4391HO students will write one paper that is 5-pages and another that is 10.) The longer of the two papers, instead of being an analysis, should focus on a shared theme, motif, or relevant topic in three of the texts (either film or short stories).
The Honors Option requires double the pages of writing for one writing assignment (see above) and a 10-minute presentation to the class of your paper in place of the final.

**Attendance:** One-third of a grade (A- → B+) for each absence beyond the allotted one

**Academic Dishonesty:** Will simply not be tolerated! This includes cheating on quizzes, plagiarizing on written assignments, and otherwise dishonestly representing someone else’s work or ideas as your own.

**Classroom Conduct:** It is expected that students will conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner during the class. You should demonstrate respect for others, appropriate classroom behavior, and responsible engagement with the materials. This includes but is not limited to engaging with the class through nine scheduled discussions and a five-minute presentation. While the presentations require some concrete preparation (in the form of a paragraph abstract and one-page outline), it is also expected that you will come to every discussion having done the assigned reading and having begun processing your thoughts related to it. We will be using facilities at Doshisha and we may have students from Doshisha in our class, therefore it is expected that you will also follow all rules set by the university and pay careful attention to how you communicate ideas and opinions.

**1945-1952: The Occupation Years**

Read:  
Nagai Tatsuo, “Brief Encounter” (1948)  
Hayashi Fumiko, “Tokyo” (1949)  
Takeda Taijun, “To Build a Bridge” (1951)  
Yasuoka Shôtarô, “Prized Possessions” (1952)

5/31 Lecture: War and its Aftermath  
6/1 Present Stories and Discussion  
6/2 Kurosawa Akira, dir. *No Regrets for Our Youth* (1946), *Drunken Angel* (1947); or *One Wonderful Sunday* (1948)  
6/3 Discuss film and stories

**1953-1964: Confronting the Past, Confronting the Future**

Read:  
Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, “In Akiko’s Room” (1958)  
Ôe Kenzaburô, “Aghwee the Sky Monster” (1964)

6/6 Lecture: Cold War Alliances and the Korean War  
6/7 Lecture: Memory and Postwar Historiography  
6/8 Present Stories and Discussion

6/10 Discuss film and stories

**1965-1974: Japan on Stage: Olympiad to Olympiad**

Read: Nosaka Akiyuki, “American Hijiki” (1967)
      Kôno Takeo, “Bone Meat” (1969)
      Kurahashi Yumiko, “To Die at the Estuary” (1970)
      Abe Akira, “Peaches” (1972)

6/13 Lecture: Cold War Alliances and the Vietnam War

6/14 Lecture: Leisure, Play, Work, and School

6/15 Present Stories and Discussion


6/17 Discuss film and stories

**1975-1989: Exporting Japan**

Read: Kaikô Takeshi, “The Crushed Pellet” (1978)
      Kanai Mieko, “Platonic Love” (1979)

6/20 Lecture: High Growth and Hyper-Consumption

6/21 Lecture: Japan, Inc. and the Myth of Japanese Uniqueness

6/22 Present Stories and Discussion


6/24 Discuss film and stories

**1990-2011: The Collapse of the Bubble**

Read: Murakami Haruki, “TV People” (1989)
      Muroi Yuzuki, “Piss” (1997)

6/27 Lecture: A New Era of Internationalization

6/28 Lecture: The Lost Decade(s)
6/29  Present Stories and Discussion
7/1   Final