AS 320 Japan Through Film
IES Abroad Tokyo

DESCRIPTION:
Like newspapers, magazines, novels and other written materials, films offer scholars an interpretation of the society they depict, through the eyes of the writers and directors who create them. Feature films can be used to study both the subjects they narrate, and the societies in which they were created and enjoyed. And while movies cannot be as “true” representations of reality—just like books, articles, diaries, documents or any other source they are interpretations and, as such, must be subject to critical scrutiny—when examined carefully, and in conjunction with other information on the subject, films provide us an invaluable source of information about the societies they portray, and the societies that produce them.

The purpose of this course is, therefore, twofold: It seeks first to deepen understanding of Japan’s society, culture, and people, through analysis of various films, produced by Japanese masters of cinematography, particularly from the post-World War II period to the present. And second, it seeks to give students practical experience in critical analysis, and to deepen their analytical skills and their ability to evaluate evidence, through the use of film as one form of evidence. Students will view films in class, and then analyze, critique, and discuss the story and its social background. In addition, we will touch on the history of Japanese cinema and the motion picture industry itself.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF PRESENTATION: English with use of relevant Japanese terms; all Japanese films will be shown with English subtitles

PREREQUISITES: none

ADDITIONAL COST: none

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:
• Films
• Lectures
• Discussions

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:
• Course participation - 10%
• Weekly Analysis Papers – 50%
• Midterm Exam - 20%
• Final Exam - 20%

Assignment Guidelines
A film analysis is not a review or summary of the plot; it should go deeper into analysis and reaction. It should discuss the issues raised by the film, address the film’s importance and purpose, state reactions to the content and quality of the film, and connect it to ideas and material presented in class. Your paper can focus on any almost any aspect of the week’s film, but should identify and relate the main themes of the film to class readings and discussions, and address the film’s representation of Japanese society and culture. You should also address, or at least consider, the following questions:

• What outstanding motifs and parallels emerge for the film's plot, settings, characters, etc.?
• What parallel traits do the characters share? How are they contrasted?
• How does the film encourage us to feel about and understand them?
• What is the film’s message—what is the film trying to say?
• How do you evaluate the film for quality and interest? Consider the acting, direction, production values and music. What strikes you as strange or particularly well done? Why? Are any literary techniques, such as symbolism, character development or foreshadowing used?
• What does the film attempt to describe about changing Japanese society? What conclusions about Japanese society do you draw from the film?
• How does this film correlate with what you’ve learned from class discussions, readings and the like? Does it contradict or support what you’ve learned elsewhere?
• Are there aspects of the story that transcend cultural boundaries? Why or why not?

Each paper should be around 800-1200 words in length. Please do not exceed this length: it is, in fact, more difficult and challenging to write a concise, and yet substantial paper than a longer rambling one.

There is no need to summarize the story, except as necessary to explain or argue your point. Focus instead on analyzing the story or the film and expressing your analytical conclusions.

Your paper will be evaluated on the following:

• Depth and quality of analysis
• Writing style

A penalty of 1/3 letter grade per week will be applied to late papers. That is, if your original grade would have been an “A,” but you turned the assignment in a week late, the grade becomes an “A-”; if the paper is two weeks late, the grade will be a “B”; etc.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of this course, the students will be able to:

• Gain deeper understanding of Japan’s social environments in different periods after World War II
• Analyze and articulate conclusions about various situations described in the films, including family, workplace, intimate relationships, and Japanese social and individual psychology
• Gain practical experience in evaluating feature films as evidence
• Rethink the boundaries between reality and representation, and re-conceptualize the boundaries between history and film.
• Understand and differentiate the diverse forms of cinematic expression employed by major contemporary film directors of Japan

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Following the attendance policy of IES Tokyo, attendance to all class meetings is strictly required for the students. The three-hour format for classes makes missing a single class equivalent to missing a full week during a regular semester. Unexcused absences will therefore result in significant grade penalties. The first unexcused absence will result in a penalty of one-third of a letter grade from your final grade; additional unexcused absences will result in a penalty of one of letter grade for each additional absence. That is, one missed class turns an A into an A-, two missed classes turns it into a B-, three turns it into a C-, and so on. An absence is considered “excused” only if it is unavoidable due to illness or other health conditions, or for other reasons approved by the instructor in advance.
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| **Week 1:** Tokyo Story (1953) by Yasujiro Ozu | Japan in the Post-War Era (the 1940s to 1960s) | - Donald Richie & Arturo Silva, “Ozu” in The Donald Richie Reader: 50 Years of Writing on Japan (2001), pp. 70-87
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<tr>
<th>Week 3: Course-related Excursion – Tokyo Tatemono-en (Koganei-city)</th>
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<td>In 1993, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government established the seven-hectare Edo-Tokyo Open-air Architectural Museum as part of the Edo-Tokyo Museum. This museum aims to relocate, reconstruct, preserve and exhibit historical buildings of great cultural value that are impossible to preserve at their actual places as well as to inherit these valuable cultural heritages to future generations. This huge open air museum, often used as a location site for movies and TV dramas, exactly recreates the space and the atmosphere of how people lived and ran businesses in their daily lives from the late 19th to mid-20th century. During this visit, students will learn about the transformation of Japanese life through the modern history and experience the lives of the Japanese people as realistically as possible. This is particularly helpful to understanding and appreciating the work of film directors such as Ozu Yasujiro (one of the greatest masters of Japanese cinematography), who made the traditional Japanese household architectural structure a critical component of his artistic expressions.</td>
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<td>Week 4: The Funeral (1980) by Juzo Itami</td>
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<th>Week 5: A Taxing Woman (1987) by Juzo Itami</th>
<th>Contemporary Japan after the 1980s</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• David E. Kaplan &amp; Alec Dubro, Chapt.6 “Corruption, Japanese-style,” in Yakuza: Japan’s Criminal Underworld, pp. 144-175</td>
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<td>• Eric Williams and Lawrence F. Glatz, “Cinema and the feminine threat: ‘The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum’and ‘ATaxing Woman.’” In William</td>
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<td>Week 6: Shall We Dance? (1996) by Masayuki Suwo</td>
<td>Contemporary Japan in the 1990s</td>
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<td>• Mark Shilling, “Masayuki Suo,” in Contemporary Japanese Film, pp. 72-73.</td>
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<td>• Tokuhiro Yoko, “Gender Roles: the Roles of Wife and Mother” (2011) pp. 73-88.</td>
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<td>Week 7: Hanabi (1998) by Takeshi Kitano</td>
<td>Contemporary Japan in the 1990s</td>
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<td>• Christopher J. Ferguson, “Media Violence Effects and Violent Crime:</td>
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<td><strong>Week 8:</strong> Course-related Excursion - National Film Center Museum (Kyobashi, Tokyo)</td>
<td>Historical development of the cinema industry in Japan since the 19th century</td>
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<td>The only national institution for the preservation and research of films, built on the site of some of Japan’s earliest cinemas (used to be in the Meiji period), this museum includes a permanent display of the comprehensive history of Japanese films and the Japanese film industry from the start in the 19th century, as well as special seasonal exhibitions on various themes.</td>
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<td>The visit to this museum allows students to understand the history and transformation of the film industry in Japan, which will also deepen their understanding of the films studied in class. A special lecture by one of the curators of the museum (with interpretation by the instructor)</td>
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- Good Science or Moral Panic?” in Christopher J. Ferguson, Violent Crime: Clinical and Social Implications (2010), pp. 37-56
has been arranged, so that the students will have an opportunity to learn from an expert on what is going on in the Japanese film industry today.

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<th>Week 10: My Darling is a Foreigner (2010) by Kazuaki Ue</th>
<th>Cross-Cultural Encounters</th>
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<td>Susan L. Kline, Brian Horton, and Shuangyue Zhang, “Communicating Love: Comparisons Between American and East Asian University Students.”</td>
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**Week 11: Nobody Knows (2004) by Hirokazu Koreeda**

Final Exam will be handed out to students.


**REQUIRED READINGS:**


“Japan’s Economic Miracle and the 1950s, 60s, and 70s Under Yoshida, Ikeda, Sato, and Tanaka,” Facts and Details (http://factsanddetails.com/japan.php?itemid=524&catid=16&subcatid=110), 13 pages


_____., “Domesticating Domesticity” in House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880-1930 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), pp. 21-55


_____., “Masayuki Suo.” In Contemporary Japanese Film (Boston & London: Weatherhill, 1999), pp. 72-73.


RECOMMENDED READINGS:


