FS/CX/AS 321 CONTEMPORARY JAPAN ON SCREEN
IES Abroad Tokyo

DESCRIPTION:
The purpose of this course is to explore contemporary (and future) Japan through film from the late 1980s to the present and beyond. The foundations of the course lie in Film Studies in its broader sense. It is not intended to simply summarize the sociopolitical issues of contemporary Japan as depicted in films. Rather, it is designed to analyze the films themselves in order to understand, through their aesthetics and formal aspects, what new forms of production, distribution and consumption, the intersection of screens (in theatres, at home, in our pockets), pop culture and the media mix, etc., tell us about Japan and how its society is evolving. Among the themes covered in this course are the social impact of technology (digitization, robots); Japan in a globalized world (the Cool Japan initiative, geopolitics); demography (an aging and decreasing population depopulation of rural areas); history (how films look onto the past to understand/justify/criticize the present); and apocalyptic narratives and gender issues.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF PRESENTATION: English with Japanese terms.

PREREQUISITES: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:
This course will consist of lectures, film viewing, discussions and student presentations. Experiential learning will be promoted through course related trips to sites of interest in the Tokyo area.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:
• Course Participation - 10%
• Midterm paper - 20%
• Field trip reaction paper - 10%
• Film reaction papers - 20% (2 papers, 10% each)
• Final assignment (Research project):
  I – Weekly report
  II – Research paper - 20%
  III – Final presentation - 10%
  IV – Presentations reaction paper - 10%

Reaction papers allow you to express your own feelings and opinion on the addressed topic. Nevertheless, they should not simply be just an expression of personal tastes, but a reflection on them while engaging with and making use of the course readings, learned concepts and ideas discussed in class to substantiate your own thought. Also, as class assignments, they should be written in an academic tone and style.

There is more detailed information on each task below, including rubrics. The ones for written assignments and for the presentation are at the end of this section.

Course Participation
Involvement in class, particularly in the film discussions after screenings, is not only a requirement, but a way to demonstrate having read and reflected on the required readings. Check specific rubric below.
Rubric for course participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Below expectations</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to class dynamics</td>
<td>Does not listen with respect nor considers others' ideas.</td>
<td>Listens with respect, but with scarce active participation.</td>
<td>Respectfully listens, discusses and asks questions.</td>
<td>Respectfully listens, discusses and asks questions that engage the whole group and foster classmates' participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to class contents</td>
<td>Almost never provides useful information or ideas for discussion.</td>
<td>Sometimes provides useful information or ideas for discussion.</td>
<td>Usually provides useful information or ideas for discussion.</td>
<td>Usually gathers information and shares useful ideas for discussion that are relevant for the subject and deepens on its contents.</td>
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Midterm paper (must be submitted before the beginning of the session 6 class)
The midterm assignment is composed of a question paper (short answers) and a reaction paper (1000-1400 words) to the field trip in session 4 and the film viewed in session 5, which altogether summarize all the contents from previous sessions. Therefore, reflection on all the topics covered until the moment is expected.
Check rubric for written assignments below.

Course-related trip reaction paper (800-1200 words, before session 8)
A reaction paper (see above) to the second field trip in session 7.
Check rubric for written assignments below.

Film reaction papers (800-1200 words each, to be submitted within 5 days after the screening)
Reaction papers (see above) to the films screened on sessions 9 and 10.
Check rubric for written assignments below.

Final Assignment
Despite being labeled “final”, this assignment implies a continuous work from the beginning of the course and throughout the duration of the term, as it is designed to provide continuous assessment. It is a research project, for which students would choose a topic of their interest and of relevance to the course content, consisting on four different tasks:

- Weekly report on research activity. Students should record and justify their work every week in a report to be delivered the day before next class. The task will not be graded but failing to submit reports implies the student is not fulfilling the course requirements, so it will be penalized in the final grade for the research paper. It is intended to help students maintain the appropriate timing and work flow while guiding them in the research process, so not following this activity would for sure affect the quality of the research outcome and the final marks, consequently, will be lower.

There should be six weekly reports: the first one, due the day before class 3, should state the chosen topic, with a brief explanation on the reasons and expectations at this choice, and a prospective bibliography. Then, the rest of the weekly reports are due before classes 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. They should include the reference and a brief comment on each of the books, book chapters or articles read since the previous report. Also, they should include a comment on the advance of
the research: relevance of the commented readings, new findings, prospectives and insights, problems detected and/or solved, questions or requests for advice to the teacher, etc.

- **Research paper** (at least 2000 words, due before session 12). The outcome of the research activity should be submitted in the form of an essay. Check rubric for written assignments below.

- **Final presentation (session 11 or 12).** A draft for the presentation is due the day before session 9, so there is still time left to comment on and correct possible mistakes or improve weak points. The allotted time for each presentation will depend on the number of students. Check specific rubric below.

- **Presentations reaction paper (1000-1400 words, due within three days after the last session).** This task is intended to summarize the whole course through a critical reflection on how the different research works presented in class articulate, complement, dialogue with, contradict, expand... the course contents. Check rubric for written assignments below.

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<tr>
<th>Rubric for written assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>category</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not enough relevant information, gathered from limited sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses a reasonable amount of information, yet not always pertinent and/or gathered from limited sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses a reasonable amount of pertinent information, gathered from multiple sources, electronic and non-electronic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses a wide amount of information, all of it relevant, gathered from multiple sources, electronic and non-electronic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>No apparent organization makes it difficult to read and understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is an organization, yet sometimes difficult to follow and understand. Certain parts might go off the topic.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is inaccurate or overly general. Conclusions are not supported by provided evidence. Readers are unlikely to learn anything or may be misled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content has some inaccuracy or is incomplete. Conclusions are loosely based on provided evidence and/or not convincing enough. Readers may learn some isolated facts, but they are unlikely to gain new insights about the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is generally accurate and reasonably complete. Conclusions are based in provided evidence. Readers may develop some insights about the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is accurate and comprehensive. Conclusions are convincingly supported by provided evidence. Readers are likely to gain new insights about the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The document presentation is careless. The style and/or tone are not suitable for an academic work. Does not include in-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The document presentation is appropriate, but the style and/or tone of the text might include some parts that are not suitable for an academic work. In-text citations and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The document presentation is careful and clean. The text is written in a proper academic style, including in-text citations, bibliography*, footnotes when required, and visual elements to support the text.</td>
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* Bibliography and in-text citations should follow the Harvard format. A concise guide on its use can be found in the link:
https://www.mendeley.com/guides/harvard-citation-guide

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
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<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>No apparent organization makes it difficult to follow for listeners. Evidence is not used to support assertions.</td>
<td>There is some organization, but the speaker occasionally goes off topic. Evidence used to support conclusions is weak.</td>
<td>The presentation has a focus and provides reasonable evidence to support conclusions.</td>
<td>The presentation is carefully organized and provides convincing evidence to support conclusions.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Below expectations</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The content is inaccurate or overly general. Listeners are unlikely to learn anything or may be misled.</td>
<td>The content has some inaccuracy or is incomplete.Listeners may learn some isolated facts, but they are unlikely to gain new insights about the topic.</td>
<td>The content is generally accurate and reasonably complete. Listeners may develop some insights about the topic.</td>
<td>The content is accurate and comprehensive. Listeners are likely to gain new insights about the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Delivery</th>
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<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>The speaker reads notes, rather than speaks. Listeners are ignored. No supporting materials.</td>
<td>The speaker may occasionally read notes, rather than speak. Listeners are often ignored or misunderstood. Supporting material is carelessly prepared and ineffective.</td>
<td>Listeners are generally recognized and understood. Supporting material is appropriate to the purpose of the presentation and helpful to clarify the speaker’s claims.</td>
<td>The speaker is comfortable and interacts effectively with listeners. Supporting materials convincingly reinforce the speaker’s claims.</td>
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LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Offer an historical overview of Japanese cinema, as the base to understand contemporary Japanese film culture.
- Demonstrate understanding of some basic concepts from the field of Film studies
- Apply this knowledge to discuss contemporary issues of Japan, extracting relevant information from the viewing of recent films
- Deepen their knowledge and understanding on a diversity of issues related to Japanese culture and society
- Develop a critical stance on contemporary Japan

ATTENDANCE POLICY
Regular class attendance is considered mandatory, according to the Academic Policy Guidelines. Following the attendance policy of IES Abroad Tokyo, attendance of all classes is required including course-related trips.
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 students’ final grades; additional unexcused absences will result in a penalty of one 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 documented illness or other health conditions, or for other reasons approved by the instructor in advance. Any exams, tests, presentations, or other work missed due to student absences can only be rescheduled in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

CONTENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Assignments &amp; Readings</th>
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</table>
Week 3 | **Japanese History in contemporary films**  
How the past is recreated in recent screen productions and what does it tells us about the present day. *Jidaigeki* and *jidaikigeki*. Nationalism and history revisionism.  


Week 4 | **Course-related trip #1:**  
the Tora-san Museum and the Yamada Yôji Museum  

allow us having a glimpse on the transition from the studios system to contemporary filmmaking through the biography and works of film director Yamada Yōji.

Apart from the course contents, this course-related trip would bring the class to the picturesque Shibamata, the neighborhood of Tokyo where it is located. This suppose an immersion on the atmosphere of Showa era Tokyo. The ticket for the museum includes the visit to a nearby mansion, the Yamamoto-tei, with a renowned traditional garden, and the popular Buddhist temple Taishakuten, with famed wood carvings on display, is also in the area. As an integral experience, beyond the strict boundaries of the course, this course-related trip might be valuable to the students in many regards. Arts, history, urbanism, society... many aspects of Japanese culture and society might be experienced with this visit.

**RECOMMENDED VIEWING BEFORE SESSION 5**

* Twilight Samurai, The (Tasogare Seibei, 2002, Yamada Yōji) *

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**Week 5**  
**Film viewing:**  
*The Hidden Blade (Kakushi ken: Oni no tsume, 2004, Yamada Yōji)*  
This film forms a diptych with Yamada’s previous release, *The Twilight Samurai (Tasogare Seibei, 2002).*  
This screening and the subsequent discussion complements and summarizes sessions 2 to 4.

The midterm paper must be submitted before the beginning of the next session.

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**Week 6**  
**Technology on screen**  
Digitalization and transformations of the screen culture. Virtual worlds. Mechanical bodies, robots, atomic technology and the apocalypse.

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| Week 7 | **Course-related trip #2: Daigo Fukuryu Maru Exhibition Hall & Kawasaki Robostage**

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are symbols of the nuclear trauma, but Japan has experienced the atomic fear on more occasions. One of them is the incident with the ship Daigo Fukuryu Maru, whose crew was incidentally the victim of a nuclear test in the Pacific. The Daigo Fukuryu Maru Exhibition Hall (http://d5f.org/en/tenji.html) accommodates the ship itself, along to a collection of objects, documents and panels explaining the unfortunate events that its crew members were victims of. The second part of this course-related trip keeps on exploring the effects of technology on human life. Only a few minutes away, Kawasaki Robostage (https://robotics.kawasaki.com/ja1/robostage/en.html) showcases the different robots created by this company. A reflection around the robot-human interaction and cohabitation is the axis of the exhibition.

The reaction paper for this field trip must be submitted before the beginning of the next session. |
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| Week 8 | **Youth, elderly, gender**

Family and generational conflict has been and still is a prominent topic in Japanese films throughout its history. Contemporary cinematic depictions of different generations and the social issues related to them are recurrent. Another social issue such as gender inequalities will be analyzed from film depiction to its dimension behind the screen. | **Domenach, É.** (2015). Fukushima en Cinéma. Voix du cinéma japonais / Fukushima in Film. Voices from Japanese Cinema. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press. [pp. 17-24, 169-183] Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/23457390/Fukushima_en_Cinéma_Voix_du cinéma_japonais_Fukushima_in_Film_Voices_from_Japanese_Cinema_University_of_Tokyo_Press_2015


The final draft for the presentation must be submitted before the beginning of the next session.


**Session 9**

**Film viewing:**
- *Sayonara* (2015, Fukada Kōji)
- or *Robo-G (Robo Ji, 2012, Yaguchi Shinobu)*

[Though in a notably differentiated manner, both films delve in similar topics and, for the purpose of the course, might be interchangeable.]

This screening and the subsequent discussion complements and summarizes sessions 6 to 8.

Reaction paper for this film should be submitted before the following session.


**Session 10**

**Film viewing:**
- *All about Lily Chow-Chow (Riri Shushu no Subete, 2001, Iwai Shunji)*

Reaction paper for this film should be submitted before the following session.

Reaction paper for the previous film should have been submitted before this session.


### Session 11

**Student presentations**

Reaction paper for the previous film should have been submitted before this session.

### Session 12

**Student presentations and wrap-up of the course**

Reaction paper for presentations in this and in the previous session, should be submitted within the three days following this session.

### REQUIRED READINGS:


**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**


**RECOMMENDED FILMS:**
(Excerpt clips of many of them will be used during class presentations)

• *5 Centimeters per Second* (『秒速 5 マチメートル』, 2007, Shinkai Makoto)

• *About the Pink Sky* (『ももいろそらを』, 2011, Kobayashi Keiichi)

• *After Life* (『ワンダフルライフ』, 1998, Koreeda Hirokazu)

• *Air Doll* (『空気人形』, 2009, Kore’eda Hirokazu)

• *Akira* (『AKIRA』, 1988, Otomo Katsuhiro)

• *All about Lily Chow-Chow* (『リリイ・シュシュのすべて』, 2001)

• *Animatrix* (The Animatrix, 2003, VVAA)

• *Azumi* (『あずみ』, 2003, Kitamura Ryūhei)

• *Babel* (2006, Alejandro González Iñárritu)

• *Battle Royale* (『バトル・ロワイアル』, 2000, Fukasaku Kinji)

• *Bounce Kogals* (『バウンス GALS』, 1997, Harada Masato)

• *Casshern* (『キャシャーン』, 2004, Kiriya Kazuaki)

• *Fireworks* (打ち上げ花火、下から見るか？横から見るか？, 1993, Iwai Shunji)

• *Ghost in the Shell* (攻殻機動隊, 1995, Oshii Mamoru)

• *Hana* (『花よりもなほ』, 2006, Kore’eda Hirokazu)

• *Hidden Blade, The* (『隠し剣 鬼の爪』, 2004, Yamada Yōji)

• *Izo* (『イゾ』, 2004, Miike Takashi)

• *Kamome Dinner* (『かもめ食堂』, 2007, Ogigami Naoko)

• *Keitai Chūshingura* (携帯忠臣蔵, 2000, Suzuki Masayuki)

• *Keito Chūshingura* (携帯忠臣蔵, 2000, Suzuki Masayuki)

• *Love Letter* (ラブレター, 1995, Iwai Shunji)

• *Love & Pop* (ラブ&ポップ, 1998, Anno Hideaki)

• *Millenium Actress* (千年女優, 2001, Kon Satoshi)

• *Paprika* (パプリカ, 2006, Kon Satoshi)

• *Picnic* [ピクニック](Pikunikku, 2004, Ishii Katsuhito)

• *Scabbard Samurai* (さや侍, 2011, Matsumoto Hitoshi)

• *Sayonara* (さよなら, 2015, Fukada Koji)

• *Shara* (沙羅双樹, 2003, Kawase Naomi)

• *Spirited Away* (千と千尋の神隠し, 2001, Miyazaki Hayao)

• *Taste of Tea, The* (茶の味, 2004, Ishii Katsuhito)

• *Summer Wars* (サマーウォーズ, 2009, Hosoda Mamoru)
• Swallowtail (『スワロウテイル』 Suwarōteiru, 1996, Iwai Shunji)
• Twilight Samurai, The (『たそがれ清兵衛』 Tasogare Seibei, 2002, Yamada Yōji) *RECOMMENDED VIEWING BEFORE SESSION 5
• Violent Cop (『その男、凶暴につき』 Sono otoko, kyōbō ni tsuki, 1989, Kitano Takeshi)