

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE CINEMA 2

Subtitle	Studying Anime
Lecturer(s)	MES, THOMAS P.
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2025 Fall
Day/Period	Fri.4
Campus	Mita
Classroom	411
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	08932
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Grade Type	S, A, B, C, D
K-Number	CIN-CO-00123-212-01

▼ Detail

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

This seminar will cover leading theoretical approaches to Japanese animation as viewed from abroad. Is anime a genre? A culture? An industry? How do we actually define anime? And what reasons exist for studying anime in the first place? To answer these questions, we will explore the history of Japanese animation and its global reach by means of the arguments put forth by leading scholars in the English language, including notably Rayna Denison, Susan Napier, Thomas Lamarre, and Jonathan Clements. We will look at the themes they identify in and around anime, such as the shojo, the otaku, and techno-orientalism, as well as investigating to what extent characteristic production methods such as hand-drawn animation define a supposedly unique nature of anime. In the process we will also attempt to identify the transnational aspects that have long formed a part of “Japanese” animation, by asking the question: how Japanese is anime?

This course has two main goals: 1) To familiarize students with major academic literature on and theoretical approaches to anime; 2) To familiarize students with applying theoretical frameworks to the study of popular culture, in the shape of assignments and a term paper.

Active Learning Methods ⓘ [Description](#)

Discussions, Debates  
Group work  
Problem-based learning

Preparatory Study

The students are recommended to read the assigned texts AFTER each week's class.

Course Plan

Lesson 1

Why and how should we study anime?

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Lesson 2

Four approaches to anime, part 1: Anime as genre

Required reading: Denison, p.15-29

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Lesson 3

Four approaches, part 2: Anime as data

Required reading: Napier, p.15-34

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Lesson 4

Four approaches, part 3: Anime as medium

Required reading: Lamarre, p.45-54

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Lesson 5

Four approaches, part 4: Anime as industry

Required reading: Clements, p.1-19

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Lesson 6

Applying the four approaches to anime: class exercises

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Lesson 7

Hand-drawn animation: Gainax vs. Studio Ghibli

Required reading: Lamarre, p.64-76

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Lesson 8

The joy of movement: *Castle of Cagliostro* film viewing

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Lesson 9

The media mix

Required reading: Steinberg, p.vii-xvii

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Lesson 10

Fan cultures and the otaku

Required readings: Azuma, Saito

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Lesson 11

Fan cultures: *Otaku no Video* film screening

Followed by class discussion

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Lesson 12

Anime and the Anthropocene: Lived experiences of anime

Required reading: Norris, Yoneyama

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Lesson 13

How Japanese is “anime”?

Required reading: Clements, p.177-190

Required listening: The Carl Macek podcast

In its podcast, Anime News Network interviewed Carl Macek, one of the pioneers of distributing Japanese

animation in North America. Macek was behind the creation of Robotech, the global success of Akira, and the first Miyazaki Hayao films released in the US:

<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/anncast/2010-01-14>

Please listen to the interview (note: it's just over 2 hours long) and take notes in preparation of this week's class discussion.

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## Lesson 14

### Concluding class discussion

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## Other

Homework and assignment preparation replace session 15.

Any additions or changes to the syllabus will be communicated in the first class.

## Method of Evaluation

This course will contain a total of three graded exercises: the writing of a short paper that will accompany the in-class film viewing, formulating a research question for the final term paper, plus the final term paper itself.

All three count toward your final grade for the course.

Assignment deadlines will be communicated during session 1.

Further instructions about the assignments will be given during the course.

## Textbooks

None

## Reference Books

All required readings will be available through K-LMS.

Hiroki Azuma. 2001/2009. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Jonathan Clements. 2013. *Anime: A History*, London: British Film Institute

Rayna Denison. 2015. *Anime: A Critical Introduction*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic

Thomas Lamarre. 2009. *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press

Susan J. Napier. 2005. *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*, New York: Palgrave

Craig Norris, "Studio Ghibli Media Tourism", in: Alisa Freedman and Toby Slade (ed.), *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 2017, p. 114-122

Roger W. Hecht, "Only Yesterday: Ecological and Psychological Recovery", in: *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Fall 2015), pp. 166-171

Saito Tamaki, "Otaku Sexuality", in: Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., and Takayuki Tatsumi ed., *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007

Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* 2012

## Lecturer's Comments to Students

Looking at Japanese animation and how it flows across borders tells us a lot about the changing role of Japan in the global imaginary and in global politics. Anime provides a window into Japan in the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as a framework for understanding how media interact.

As noted, we have two mid-term assignments and a final paper. I will provide feedback in K-LMS on your assignments.

I recommend reading the assigned texts AFTER each week's class. Note that there is no required reading for the first week.

## Question/Comments

Dr. Tom Mes, [t.mes@keio.jp](mailto:t.mes@keio.jp)

