

Mon Jan 19 2026 13:17:10 GMT+0900 (日本標準時)

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

GHOSTS AND GOBLINS IN MODERN JAPANESE LITERATURE

Subtitle	Ghosts and Goblins in Modern Japanese Literature
Lecturer(s)	BERNARD, PETER
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2026 Fall
Day/Period	Wed.3
Campus	Mita
Classroom	433
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	11752
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Grade Type	S, A, B, C, D
Course Description	A course to aim to learn introductory modern Japanese literature through ghost stories to fairy tales to the literary equivalent of the splatter film.
K-Number	CIN-CO-00113-212-02

[▼ Detail](#)

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

Modern Japanese literature is filled with ghosts and goblins—if only you know where to look. This course surveys some of the strangest, scariest, and wildest fiction in modern Japan. It is designed as an introductory survey to the material, meaning that no prior knowledge of Japanese literature or Japanese history is required. We will begin at the “beginning” of modern Japanese literature in the late nineteenth century and work our way up through more contemporary works, and the stories we will encounter range from ghost stories to fairy tales to the literary equivalent of the splatter film.

Along the way, we will ask ourselves a set of interlinking questions. How did the broad genre of what is today known in Japanese as *gensō bungaku*, roughly corresponding to supernatural, horror, and fantasy genres, emerge and develop as a set of assumptions about the nature of modern life in Japan? How do these assumptions challenge our way of interacting with the world, with other people, and ultimately with our own sense of self? What kind of new understandings of various boundaries—between the real and the unreal, the present and the past, the foreign and the native, the living and the dead—might these stories suggest? And how are these texts part of a larger global network of weird fiction—what, in other words, does it mean to call a Japanese text “Gothic”?

(Please note that this class will be taught in English, and all distributed readings will be in English translation.)

You will need to complete a reading assignment as homework for each class session. This class requires a significant amount of reading outside of class, so please budget your time wisely with the weekly reading assignments.

Course Taught by Faculty Member with Professional Experience

Not applicable

Active Learning Methods [Description](#)

Discussions, Debates
Group work

Preparatory Study

You will need to complete a reading assignment as homework for each class session. This class requires a significant amount of reading outside of class, so please budget your time wisely with the weekly reading assignments.

The amount of time required to complete these assignments is dependent on the student's English reading proficiency, but students can expect to spend multiple hours on assignments and preparatory study for each class session.

Course Plan

Lesson 1

Course Introduction

Lesson 2

Kōda Rohan and the Origins of gensō bungaku

2. Kōda Rohan, "Encounter with a Skull"

Assignment #1 due

Lesson 3

Izumi Kyōka's Supernatural Fiction

3. Izumi Kyōka, "One Day in Spring" (first half)

Lesson 4

Izumi Kyōka and the Possibilities of Radical Disorientation

4. Izumi Kyōka, "One Day in Spring" (second half)

Assignment #2 due

Lesson 5

Real/Unreal in Natsume Sōseki and Mori Ōgai

5a. Natsume Sōseki, selections from Ten Nights Dreaming

5b. Mori Ōgai, "Ghost Stories"

Lesson 6

Folk Horror

6a. Lafcadio Hearn, "The Story of Mimi-nashi-Hōichi" and "Yuki-Onna," in Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange

Things

6b. Yanagita Kunio, selections from The Legends of Tōno

Assignment #3 due

Lesson 7

Gothic Grotesque Nonsense

7. Murayama Kaita, "The Diabolical Tongue"

Lesson 8

Specters of Empire

8. Satō Haruo, "The Tale of the Bridal Fan"

Assignment #4 due

Lesson 9

Orikuchi Shinobu's "Antiquity"

9. Orikuchi Shinobu, The Book of the Dead (first half)

Lesson 10

Ghosts, History, and the Uses of the Past

10. Orikuchi Shinobu, The Book of the Dead (second half)

Assignment #5 due

Lesson 11

The Dark Fairy Tale and Postwar Feminist Horror

11. Kanai Mieko, "Rabbits"

Lesson 12

Folktales Retold

12. Matsuda Aoko, selections from Where the Wild Ladies Are

Assignment #6 due

Lesson 13

Weird Futures

13. Torishima Dempow, "Prologue," "Fragment: Plunder," and "Sisyphean (Or, Perfect Attendants)" (first half), in Sisyphean

Lesson 14

Horror, Temporality, Identity

14. Torishima Dempow, "Sisyphean (Or, Perfect Attendants)" (second half)

Other

Final essay due

Method of Evaluation

Grades will be calculated as follows:

- 40% Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion
- 30% Short written responses
- 30% Final 2,000-word essay

In-class participation: Please note that active participation in class discussion is an important aspect of the class. Students who complete the weekly readings and participate in class discussion will likely succeed in the class; those who do not have a high chance of failing the class.

Final essay: The essay prompt will ask students to synthesize the reading they have done throughout the semester; no outside reading or research will be required to complete the assignment. (More details about the final essay will be distributed later in the semester.)

Please note that there is no final exam administered for this class.

You will need passing grades on all course requirements to obtain a grade for the course.

If you miss more than three class sessions for an unexcused reason you will receive a failing grade for the course.

Any instances of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will immediately result in a failing grade for the course.

Generative AI Policy for Classes

The use of AI is not permitted in this course. The use of AI in any work submitted by a student will be considered an instance of academic dishonesty and will immediately result in a failing grade for the course.

Textbooks

You will need to purchase the following books for this class:

- 1) Orikuchi Shinobu. *The Book of the Dead*. Translated by Jeffrey Angles. University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- 2) Matsuda Aoko. *Where the Wild Ladies Are*. Translated by Polly Barton. Tilted Axis Press, 2020.
- 3) Torishima Dempow. *Sisyphian*. Translated by Daniel Huddleston. Haikasoru, 2018.

Reference Books

Students are welcome to consult with the instructor for suggestions if they are interested in reading more about modern Japanese literature.

Lecturer's Comments to Students

See above.

(Please note that this class will be taught using a "face-to-face" format in Fall 2026. In other words, students will need to physically attend class sessions on campus.)

Question/Comments

Students can contact me via email (to be distributed on the first day of class); students are also welcome to schedule office hours to discuss assignments and other course-related matters.