Japanese popular culture: globalization, cultural production/consumption & creative ecology

This course is centered round an interdisciplinary area studies (specifically Japanese studies) approach to studying Japanese popular culture. It is divided into three main sections. For its conceptual and theoretical approach, the Japanese studies course employs area studies perspectives in ethnography, globalization studies, historical perspectives and cultural studies to examine the subject matter. In examining the ideas of globalization, the course critically looks at the ethnography and ecology of creative production through Ian Condry’s seminal work on anime industry. In terms of mechanisms of dissemination, it then examines how globalization facilitated the popularity and proliferation of Japanese ACG (Anime, Comics, Games) products through Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto’s edited volume and William Tsutsui’s accessible text (e.g. concepts of hybridization) on this topic. The last section of the course will focus on some case studies of popular cultural products. How do features of these products resonate with local audiences in East Asia and North America? Doraemon and Godzilla are also useful case studies in this area. The course will also critically examine fandom consumption in Anne Allison’s case study of Pikachu’s success in North America.

Objectives:

- To critically examine the concepts of globalization, cultural production and creative ecology in Japanese popular cultural industries.
To critically analyze popular cultural consumption by contemporary Japanese and overseas fandom

To critically examine major theoretical debates related to the subject matter and discuss their major contributions and potential critiques.

Course Schedule

1: Class 1
   Introduction of the syllabus, its requirements and some multimedia presentation of the course.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF ANIME

2: Class 2
   Reading:
   Chapter Four When Anime Robots Became Real

3: Class 3
   Reading:
   Chapter Six Dark Energy: What Overseas Fans Reveal about the Copyright Wars

4: Class 4
   Reading:
   Chapter Seven Love Revolution: Otaku Fans in Japan, pp. 185-203
   Conclusion Future Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Cultural Action, pp. 204-217

5: Class 5
GLOBALIZATION THEME

Reading: Tsutsui, William M., Japanese popular culture and globalization (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies), 2010
Chapters covered:
• Forms and themes in Japanese popular culture
• Historical roots
• Postwar popular culture
• Themes in Japanese pop
• Sources of the Japanese pop imagination

Reading: Tsutsui, William M., Japanese popular culture and globalization (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies), 2010
Chapters covered:
• Japanese culture, Western models
• The legacies of defeat
• Change and subversion
• The global appeal of Japanese popular culture
• Quality, content, and difference

6: Class 6
Reading: Tsutsui, William M., Japanese popular culture and globalization (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies), 2010
Chapters covered:
• Familiarity and the media marketplace
• The smell of pop
• American trauma, Japanese pop
• A world of fans
• Lost in translation?: adapting Japanese popular culture for global audiences

Reading: Tsutsui, William M., Japanese popular culture and globalization (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies), 2010
Chapters covered:
• Dubbing, editing, censoring
• Lovable kooks, enduring stereotypes
• Remade in America
• Japan as soft superpower
• The Japanese state and popular culture
• The economics of Japanese pop
• Soft power, hard realities.

7: Class 7


8: Class 8

-Case study of Doraemon: the concept of resonance and collective experience
Shiraishi, Saya S., "Doraemon Goes Abroad" in Japan Pop!: Inside the world of Japanese popular culture (edited by Timothy J. Craig) (NY: East Gate), 2000, pp. 287-308
Case study of Godzilla and nuclear energy

9: Class 9
CASE STUDIES

Case study of Pokemon and globalization

10: Class 10
Lecture notes on Akihabara

11: Class 11
Fieldtrip 1: Tokyo Anime Center; 03-5298-1188; Soto-Kanda 4-14-1, Akihabara UDX 4F. Source: http://whereintokyo.com/venues/25299.html (subject to schedule change and logistical requirements)

12: Class 12
Presentations of essay project

13: Class 13
Presentations of essay project

14: Class 14
Presentations of essay project

15: Class 15
Conclusion to the course and class participants’ peer review of presentations of essay project.

Textbooks:

- Tsutsui, William M., Japanese popular culture and globalization (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies), 2010

Related sections of the textbooks will be distributed.

Readings in the course:
- Allison, Anne, “Gotta Catch ‘Em All”: The Pokemonization of America (and the World)” and “Epilogue” in Millennial Monsters (Berkeley, LA
-Shiraishi, Saya S., "Doraemon Goes Abroad" in Japan Pop!: Inside the world of Japanese popular culture (edited by Timothy J. Craig) (NY: East Gate), 2000, pp. 287-308

Additional non-essential resources:

Rate Evaluation Criteria
Exam: Evaluation.

---Take home exam paper 50%
1000 word response, including footnotes and bibliography.
(1 broadly-constructed essay question to elicit response from class participation)

CRITERIA FOR ESSAY GRADING
*Issues clearly identified
*clear and logical framework for organizing discussion
*appropriate material selected
*wide reading from many sources?
*linking of material between sections?
*Argumentation and analysis?
*Coherence?
*Logically related answer?
*sophisticated analysis?
*new ideas and innovative thinking?
*processing of information: relationship of facts or concepts?
*balanced without dogmatism?
*support from literature?

Class participation 25%
Evaluation criteria: based on active class attendance and engagement in class discussions and debates.

Presentation 25%
Based on presentation of essay project, grading criteria for the Powerpoint (PPT) presentation are:

CRITERIA FOR PRESENTATION GRADING
- Issues clearly identified?
* Clear and logical framework for organizing discussion?
* Argumentation and analysis?
* Coherence?
* Processing of information: relationship of facts or concepts?
* Balanced without dogmatism?

Main Language: English

The instructor accepts class/tutorial questions and points of clarifications in Chinese, Cantonese and Japanese.