



ANIME AND JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE ACADEMIC COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE:

Cross-Cultural Studies - Anime and Japanese Popular Culture

COURSE CODE: 268901 (Session A), 268902 (Session B) or 268903 (Session C)

COURSE LEVELS:

Classes are taught and conducted in English. No Japanese language level is required.

CREDITS:

The course meets for a minimum of 45 hours per two week period. Students receive 4 Oberlin University credits with a minimum grade of a D.

MEETING TIMES:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday (days may vary based on activity schedule)
Periods: 1 – 4 (periods and times may vary based on activity schedule)

DESCRIPTION:

This course is a survey of Japanese popular culture with particular topics covered as anime manga, fashion, music, art, and sports. Part of the course will focus on Japanese animation within a historic and popular cultural perspective. Both anime and manga will be examined with particular emphasis on the art, culture and national and international popularity. In addition, we will cover the history of how Japan took over the video game market, became a fashion powerhouse, and some of its popular sports such as baseball, professional wrestling, and combat sports, and how they became popular domestically and worldwide.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/ OUTCOMES:

By the end of the session, students should be able:

- 1) Have a better understanding about Japanese culture through popular culture themes.
- 2) Be able to connect popular cultural themes to Japanese ways of thought, perception, ideals, history, and behavior.
- 3) Understand more about the popular anime works and develop a critical analysis of material and its authors.
- 4) Understand the historic themes of anime and manga and how they tie into Japanese culture.
- 5) Understand how video games and fashion were influenced by the West, and how Japan appropriated the mediums into the identities of their youths and popularized them worldwide.
- 6) How baseball came to Japan and how an American past time become popular.
- 7) How professional wrestling shaped the spirit of the Japanese after World War II and how it influenced Mixed Martial Arts.
- 8) Develop presentation skills through discussion and in class assignments.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

Lecture, experiential (fieldwork or study tour), participatory (dialogical, reciprocal learning), inquiry (research & inquiry, cooperative group, engage by generating questions), critical thinking and constructive thinking (analyzing and examining media, multiple alternative culture), creative future thinking (action agenda, root cause, exchange ideas).

TEXTBOOK(S) AND/OR CLASS MATERIALS:

The instructor will provide class materials.

GRADING, CERTIFICATE, GRADING PLAN & EVALUATION:

All students will get a grade for this academic course. You will also get a Certificate of Completion at the end of the course. Students who do not pass with a letter grade of D or above will not be awarded a Certificate of Completion.



Grading Scale:

- 100–90% = A (Excellent)
- 89–80% = B (Good)
- 79–70% = C (Satisfactory)
- 69–60% = D (Passing but Needs Improvement)
- 59% and below = F (Failing)

Grade Breakdown:

- Class Participation – 25%
Active involvement in classroom drills, discussions, and activities.
Punctuality and consistent preparedness.
- Attendance – 25%
- Assignments – 20%
- Final Project – 30%

COURSE POLICIES:

It is required for students to attend all classes and come to class on time. Students should refrain from using cell phones while in class and eating during class times.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

- Due to the intensive 9-day structure, attendance is mandatory. Each class represents a significant portion of instruction, and missing even one session may impact overall progress.
- Punctuality is required. Arriving late disrupts the learning environment and diminishes student progress.
- Arrivals 5 minutes or more after class begins will be marked as late (0.5 deduction).
- Arrivals 30 minutes or more after class begins will be considered an absence (0).
- Absences must be communicated to the instructor in advance whenever possible. Excused absences may be granted only in cases of illness or emergency, at the discretion of the instructor.
- Impact on Grades – Excessive lateness or absences will significantly lower the participation grade, which constitutes 30% of the final grade. More than two absences may place a student at risk of failing the course.

STUDENT CONDUCT:

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and responsible manner that contributes to a positive learning environment. This includes:

- Respect for Others – Listening attentively, not interrupting, and valuing diverse cultural perspectives in discussions.
- Classroom Etiquette – Refraining from disruptive behaviors such as side conversations, excessive phone use, or distracting activities.
- Preparedness and Participation – Bringing necessary materials, completing assignments, and actively engaging in class activities.
- Professionalism – Arriving on time, observing deadlines, and demonstrating commitment to the short yet intensive format of the course.

Failure to adhere to expected standards of conduct may affect participation grades and, in serious cases, may lead to disciplinary measures in accordance with university policies.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

Optional reading at one's own leisure:

"Pure Invention" by Matt Alt, "Otaku and the Struggle for Imagination" by Patrick Galbraith, "Ametora How Japan Saved American Style" by W. David Marx.



COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

Class Day 1:

Self-introductions. Field Trip: Akihabara.

Class Day 2:

Osamu Tezuka: The Godfather of Manga.

Other Manga artists who helped shaped The industry.-Go Nagai, Masami Kurumada, Leiji Matsumoto, CLAMP, etc

Class Day 3:

Anime Viewing Day: We will be watching some select anime appropriate for the class and discuss them after watching.

Class Day 4:

Anime between the 1970s and 1980s-Discuss how certain genres became prominent in these decades such as mech. Anime between the 1990s and 2000s (ie, Gatchaman, Yamato, Gundam).

Discuss how shonen and shojo became popular around this time (ie DBZ and Sailor Moon).

Class Day 5:

Hello Kitty and fashion influences (Documentary); idol and kawaii culture.

How Ginza and Harajuku became fashion centers of Tokyo.

-Gyaru, Gothic Lolita, Visual Kei, School Uniforms.

Class Day 6:

How Japanese video games came to dominate the international market.

A History of Nintendo Nintendo figures: Hiroshi Yamauchi, Yokoi Gunpei, and Shigeru Miyamoto

History of Sega Sega figures: Yuji Naka, Yu Suzuki, and Rie Kodma.

Class Day 7:

Field Trip: Suginami Anime Museum -To learn the history of the process of how anime is made. Make your own original animated short. Experience the voice acting booth.

Class Day 8:

Big in Japan.

How foreigners become famous in Japan through sports and entertainment.

Class Day 9:

Final presentations: Students must individually and/or in groups provide an anime to recommend or something about Japanese culture that interests them.