

Arts and Ideas 310: Japanese Culture and Artistic Creation

Instructor: Christopher Daniels

Location: CH 131 / 10:25-11:15 MWF

Required Texts:

Wabi Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers, Leonard Koren

Kokoro, Natsume Soseki

The Elephant Vanishes, Haruki Murakami

Movies:

Yojimbo, Akira Kurosawa

Various others

Music:

Please bring a CD-R at some point before the music unit, as I will record a CD's worth of Japanese music that we will discuss.

Course Objective: The goal of this class is to examine art's function to expose and reconcile an individual's relationship to society. Most art is heavily concerned with this theme, and a favorite vehicle of writers, filmmakers, and musicians to express this is the conflict between the outsider and the insider. We are going to examine these ideas in the culture of Japan in particular -- not only because it has a markedly different history, but also because of the way it has absorbed, reconfigured, and retransmitted the archetypes and themes of our own culture.

We will examine a traditional Japanese aesthetic (*wabi-sabi*), and then take a look at Modern (i.e. 20th and 21st century) Japanese artists in literature, film, visual art, and music to see how they attempt to solve the problem of belonging to the group while staying outside of the mainstream.

Attendance and Participation:

A major part of your grade is going to be based on participation – this means that you should be in class, you should prepare by reading the assigned texts, and you should speak up and offer your opinions in class. You are allowed three unexcused absences in a one semester class, and every subsequent unexcused absence will result in a drop of half a letter grade.

Grading:

Your grade will depend on your attendance, participation, the work you perform in class, as well as projects and papers that are assigned. You will have three projects due in the course of the semester.

Schedule:

August

- 20 Class Introduction, Hand out syllabus
- 22 The Individual Vs. Society / Intro to Japanese history
- 24 Wabi Sabi: Introduction, A History of Obfuscation, A Provisional Definition,: A Comparison With Modernism, A Brief History, Chart, The Metaphysical Basis of Wabi-Sabi
- 27 Wabi Sabi: Wabi-Sabi Spiritual Values, The Wabi-Sabi State of Mind, Wabi-Sabi Moral Precepts, The Material Qualities of Wabi Sabi
- 29 History
- 31 Intro to Kokoro

September

- 3 Labor Day – No Classes
- 5 Natsume Soseki / Novels
- 7 *Kokoro*: Introduction, pp. 1-80
- 10 *Kokoro*: pp. 80-162
- 12 *Kokoro*: pp. 163-248
- 14 History
- 17 Film
- 19 Kurosawa Documentary: **Project 1 due:**
- 21 *Yojimbo*
- 24 *Yojimbo*
- 26 *Yojimbo*
- 28 Talk about *Yojimbo*

October

- 1 Manga
- 3 Manga
- 5 Manga
- 8 No Class – Fall Break
- 10 Avant Garde Theater
- 12 Avant Garde Theater
- 15 Avant Garde Theater
- 17 Murakami: “The Wind-Up Bird and Tuesday’s Women”
- 19 Murakami: “The Wind-Up Bird and Tuesday’s Women”
- 22 Murakami: “Sleep”

- 24 Murakami: "Sleep"
- 26 Murakami: "Barn Burning"
- 29 Murakami: "Barn Burning"
- 31 **Murakami Class Projects Due**

November

- 2
- 5 **Murakami: Class Projects due**
- 7 **Murakami: Class Projects due**
- 9 Anime
- 12 Anime
- 14 Music
- 16 Music
- 19 Superflat
- 21 No Class - Thanksgiving
- 23 No Class - Thanksgiving
- 26 Superflat
- 28 **Project 3 Presentations**
- 30 **Project 3 Presentations**

December

- 3 **Project 3 Presentations**