

**EAJ 389**  
**Japanese Pop Culture from Edo to the Present**  
Fall 2008  
Course #9087

Instructor: David Eason  
Class Meetings: MWF 1:40-2:35pm, Humanities Room #129  
Office Hours: MWF 2:45-3:45pm  
Office: Humanities 254D  
Phone: (518) 442-4579  
Email: deason@albany.edu

**Overview**

*Godzilla, Gundam, Power Rangers, Pokémon.* These are just a few of the many famous figures and franchises frequently invoked in discussions of contemporary Japanese pop culture in both Japan and abroad. Some continue to retain a lasting relevance and appeal while others have already begun to fall by the wayside of a fast-paced, information-laden youth culture in search of the next big trend. Yet much of that which constitutes “popular culture” is at least in part rooted in the past. For while both the volume and sheer diversity of material that make up present-day Japanese popular culture may be greater than ever before, Japan has a long history involving the production and consumption of texts, music, pictures, and spectacles aimed at a popular audience and stretching back hundreds of years. As a result, in this course, rather than focus exclusively on recent developments, we will examine the many changing styles, tastes, and technologies associated with popular culture in Japan from 1600 to the present, looking closely at a host of fascinating primary sources and related secondary studies that compel us to question just what is meant by the concept of “pop culture” in historical terms.

**Required Texts** (Available for Purchase at the Campus Bookstore)

Nishiyama Matsunosuke. *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-*

1868. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

Kelly, William H. *Fanning the Flames: Fans and Consumer Culture in Contemporary Japan*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004.

Burke, Peter. *What is Cultural History?* Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004.

- Please note that all other required readings will be made available via the library's Electronic Reserve.

### **Course Requirements**

Class Participation	–	15%
In-Class Quizzes (5)	–	10%
In-Class Midterm	–	25%
In-Class Final	–	30%
Research Paper (5-7 pages)	–	20%

– Due 11/24/2008 –

- Note that attendance is mandatory and will be taken on a regular basis. Unannounced reading quizzes will be given periodically to make certain that everyone is keeping up with the assigned reading. Please be aware that neither quizzes nor participation credit can be made up in the case of an unexcused absence.

### **Grading Policies and Guidelines**

1) Letter grades are assigned in accordance with the following scale:

93-100=A; 92-90=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82=B-; 77-79=C+; 73-76=C;  
70-72=C-; 67-69=D+; 63-66=D; 60-62=D-; 0-59=E.

Work not turned in will be counted as a zero (0).

- 2) Late papers will be marked down a grade for each day late (ie. an “A” paper turned in two days late will become a “B+”).
- 3) There is no extra credit offered for this course. Do not ask for any.
- 4) “Incompletes” will only be given in the case of an emergency (sudden death in the family, serious illness) and require thorough documentation.

5) Plagiarism is a serious offense. Students who use the words and ideas of others in their written work without providing citations to the original source (s) will be given a zero (0) for the assignment along with a copy of an official “Violation of Academic Integrity Report” to be sent to the Chair of the Department of East Asian Studies, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Affairs. If you have any doubts concerning what constitutes plagiarism you are to consult with me BEFORE submitting an assignment. For more information concerning the University’s policies in regards to plagiarism and academic dishonesty in general, see the University at Albany Undergraduate Academic Regulations located on the web at – [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate\\_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html) for further details.

### Class Schedule

- All assigned readings are listed on the right-hand side of the schedule below.

ⓔ indicates material that is available through the library’s Electronic Reserve

Week #1	Themes	Readings
8/25 Mon.	Introductions	1) Nishiyama, pp. 23-40
8/27 Wed.	Approaches to Popular Culture	2) Burke, pp. 1-19
8/29 Fri.	A History of Japanese Pop Culture	
Week #2	Themes	Readings
9/1 Mon.	<b>No Class</b>	1) ⓔ Hur, “Prayer, Play, and
9/3 Wed.	The Culture of Play Circa 1700	Edo Commoners,”
9/5 Fri.	*Discussion – Popular Spectacles	pp. 136-55
		2) ⓔ Markus, “The Carnival of Edo: Misemono Spectacles from Contemporary Accounts,”

pp. 499-541			
Week #3	Themes	Readings	
9/8 Mon.	Printing and Commerce	1) Nishiyama, pp. 64-75	
9/10 Wed.	Entertainment for the Urban Elite	2) ㊦ Berry, "A Traveling Clerk Goes to the Bookstore," pp. 1-12	
9/12 Fri.	*Discussion – The World in Print	3) ㊦ "Asai Ryōi," pp. 28-38	
Week #4	Themes	Readings	
9/15 Mon.	Popular Tales and Theater	1) ㊦ Kern, "The Blossom of Pulp Fiction," pp. 95-128	
9/17 Wed.	Humor in the Edo Period	2) ㊦ "Santō Kyōden," pp. 687-710	
9/19 Fri.	*Discussion – Early Modern Manga?		
Week #5	Themes	Readings	
9/22 Mon.	Fixing Status and Place	1) Nishiyama, pp. 113-43	
9/24 Wed.	Processions and Pilgrimages	2) ㊦ "Jippensha Ikku," pp. 732-47	
9/26 Fri.	*Discussion – The Topic of Travel		
Week #6	Themes	Readings	
9/29 Mon.	<b>No Class</b>	1) ㊦ Harootunian, "Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought," pp. 53-67	
10/1 Wed.	<b>No Class</b>		
10/3 Fri.	A New 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Order	2) Nishiyama, pp. 228-50	
Week #7	Themes	Readings	

10/6	Mon.	“Civilization and Enlightenment”	1) ④ Tipton, “The Café,”
10/8	Wed.	Café Culture	pp. 119-36
10/10	Fri.	<b>No Class</b>	2) Burke, pp. 20-48
<hr/>			
<b>Week #8</b>		<b>Themes</b>	<b>Readings</b>
10/13	Mon.	The Roaring Twenties	1) ④ Silverberg, “Asakusa
10/15	Wed.	<i>Ero guro nansensu</i>	Eroticism,” pp. 177-202
10/17	Fri.	*Discussion – All That Jazz	2) ④ Atkins, “The
			Soundtrack of Modern
			Life: Japan’s Jazz
			Revolution,” pp. 45-91
<hr/>			
<b>Week #9</b>		<b>Themes</b>	<b>Readings</b>
10/20	Mon.	Living it Up in Ginza	1) ④ “Sound in the Early
10/22	Wed.	Movies and Empire	Japanese Talkies,”
10/24	Fri.	*Discussion – Prewar Cinema	pp. 311-27
			2) Burke, pp. 49-73
<hr/>			
<b>Week #10</b>		<b>Themes</b>	<b>Readings</b>
10/27	Mon.	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	1) ④ Havens, “Fitful
10/29	Wed.	Daily Life During World War II	Leisure,” pp. 148-153
10/31	Fri.	*Discussion – Wartime Propaganda	2) ④ Kushner, “A Funny
			Thing Happened to Me
			on the Way to the Front,”
			pp. 85-116
<hr/>			
<b>Week #11</b>		<b>Themes</b>	<b>Readings</b>
11/3	Mon.	The Occupation Period	1) ④ Allison, “From Ashes
11/5	Wed.	The Early Postwar	to Cyborgs,” pp. 35-65

11/7	Fri.	*Discussion – Robots!	2) ④ Schodt, “The First Japanese Robot” and “Robots of the Imagination,” pp. 55-90
Week #12		Themes	Readings
11/10	Mon.	Early Economic Recovery	1) Kelly, “Sense and
11/12	Wed.	Sports and the Olympic Games	Sensability at the
11/14	Fri.	*Discussion – Samurai Baseball?	Ballpark,” pp. 79-105
			2) Burke, pp. 74-99
Week #13		Themes	Readings
11/17	Mon.	High Speed Economic Growth	1) ④ White, “The Marketing
11/19	Wed.	A Society of Consumer Goods	of Adolescence in Japan:
11/21	Fri.	*Discussion – Pop Idols	Buying and Dreaming,”
			pp. 255-273
			2) Stevens, “Buying
			Intimacy: Proximity and
			Exchange at a Japanese
			Rock Concert,” pp. 59-77
Week #14		Themes	Readings
11/24	Mon.	The 1980s and 90s Urban Scene	1) Condry, “B-Boys and
		<b>{Research Paper Due}</b>	B-Girls: Rap Fandom and
11/26	Wed.	<b>No Class</b>	Consumer Culture in
11/28	Fri.	<b>No Class</b>	Japan,” pp. 17-39
Week #15		Themes	Readings
12/1	Mon.	Manga	1) ④ Kinsella, “Japanese

12/3	Wed.	Anime	Subculture in the 1990s:
12/5	Fri.	*Discussion – Cartoons as Culture	Otaku and the Amateur Manga Movement,” pp. 289-316 2) ④ Murakami, “Otaku Talk,” pp. 165-85
Week #16		Themes	Readings
12/8	Mon.	Japan and Globalization	1) ④ Iwabuchi, “How ‘Japanese’ is Pokémon?” pp. 53-79

\*\* The **Final Exam** will take place on Wednesday, December 10, 2008 from 10:30am to 12:30pm