

INTRODUCTION TO EAST ASIAN CINEMA
AEAS140 (8434)
Spring 2009 Fourth Quarter

Class Time and Location: MW 5:45–8:35 in HU124

Instructor: Mark Blum

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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 1:00–2:00

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Course Description

This course is a general introduction to East Asian culture and civilization studied through the modern medium of film. We will focus primarily on post-War Japanese-speaking cinema but we will also view films from China and Korea. The course meets the General Education requirement for the Arts, and presumes no prior knowledge of East Asia or cinema and its artistic traditions.

Learning Objectives

The goal of the course is gain familiarity in to the values, social norms, and ways of thinking in East Asia as expressed through the artists who created the seven films we will view and discuss. You will also gain an appreciation of the aesthetic merits as of these films in their cultural settings in Japan, and China, and Korea. And you should gain an increased understanding of the cultural background and shared values in these three societies that make these films resonate so strongly there, and the degree to which both the aesthetic and social values on display also resonate with Western culture.

Class Structure

This is a quarter course, beginning on March 16th, meeting twice a week, with a midterm on April 6th and final exam on May 11th. Normally one class will be devoted to viewing a film, and the subsequent class will be devoted its discussion, but sometimes there will be two films shown before discussion takes place. The cultural setting of the films will be explained in the discussion, which also comes after viewing the film, the idea is to see the film with no prior knowledge and react to it as a work of art and social statement. The films are only shown once and will no provision will be made for a second viewing.

Grading

Grading will be determined as follows: 20% -- class attendance, preparation, and contribution; 25% mid-term exam; 25% final exam; 30% (three reaction papers at 10% each). Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. No unexcused absences are allowed without prior notice and documentation from the undergraduate dean's office. Two points (2%) will be deducted for each unexcused absence. Numerical scores will be converted to course grades according to the following scale: A=95–100; A–=91–94; B+=88–90; B=85–87; B–=81–84; C+=78–80; C=75–77; C–=71–74; D+=68–70; D=65–67; D–=61–64; E=below 61. You must attend all classes and you must be punctual. There are no provisions for missed classes or missed exams. Wandering in and out of class is extremely distracting to the instructor and to other students in a class of this nature.

Homework

You are required to hand in three homework assignments that involve critical evaluations of films, usually of a comparative nature. These are limited to one-page, and are due at the **beginning** of class on the dates assigned. If the paper is not submitted on-time, for each day you be will marked down one full grade (e.g. B → C). These are not “reviews” on how you liked this or that film, but are academic exercises that must address the questions posed. At the top of the single page, using only one line write your name and the number of the Reaction Paper, as in “Charlie McCarthy, Reaction Paper #2”. If you want to give your homework a title, that is fine but not required or expected. Plot summaries should only appear insofar as they support an argument, in other words, you should presume your reader is already familiar with the film.

Academic Integrity

The discovery of **any** cheating (including plagiarism or shared work of any kind) on an exam or written assignment) will result in 1) expulsion from this class with a failing grade, 2) a referral of the matter to appropriate university officials. Note that copying of any material from the Internet without citation is plagiarism. There is material concerning these films on many Internet sites as they are famous for their artistic merit, but if you take this material without citation, it is cheating and you fail the course. There are no exceptions.

Class Etiquette

There is no talking, eating, or drinking allowed during the viewing or discussing of films. This is an academic exercise and you must give the film your full attention. All cell phones and pagers must be turned off **before** class begins. If your phone rings during class, you will have points deducted from your grade. You should take notes as you watch the films, recording who made the film, what it is about, etc. If necessary, consider bringing a small flashlight to assist writing in a darkened room.

Schedule

March 16	Course introduction; Film: <i>Rashōmon</i> (1950)
March 18	Lecture on history of cinema in Asia. Discussion: <i>Rashōmon</i>
March 23	Film: <i>Ran</i> (1985)
March 25	First Reaction Paper due. Discussion: <i>Ran</i>
March 30	Film: <i>Double Suicide</i> (1961)
April 1	Discussion: <i>Double Suicide</i>
April 6	Midterm Exam
April 8	spring break
April 13	spring break
April 15	Film: <i>Raise the Red Lantern</i> (1991)
April 20	Second Reaction Paper due. Film: <i>Grave of the Fireflies</i>
April 22	Discussion: <i>Grave of the Fireflies</i>
April 27	Film: <i>Spring, Fall, Summer, Winter. . . and Spring Again</i> (2004)
April 29	Discussion: <i>Spring, Fall, Summer</i>
May 4	Third Reaction Paper due. Film: <i>Tampopo</i> (1985)
May 11 (M)	FINAL EXAM: 5:45PM – 7:45PM

NOTE: Titles of films are subject to change without notice (depending on availability)