JAPN 308-01

The Japanese Culture of Disaster

Time & Place: TR 9:30 - 10:50, Blow 333
Instructor: Rachel DiNitto (rxdini@wm.edu)
Office: Washington 236, 221-3791
Office Hours: W 1:00-3:00, or by appointment

Course Description:
From Godzilla to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, the Japanese have watched the destruction of their nation in sci-fi films and on the TV news. Japanese culture has narrated and responded to these disasters in film, literature, art, manga and music. This class examines the Japanese imagination of disaster starting with sci-fi films of the 1950s to the triple disaster of 2011. Primary texts include: Gojira, Akira, The Sinking of Japan, After the Quake, No Man’s Zone, and March Was Made of Yarn. We will also look at the following theoretical texts that provide various means for analyzing the primary materials that emerge from disasters: Susan Sontag’s “The Imagination of Disaster” and Regarding the Pain of Others, Jeffrey Alexander and other critics on Cultural Trauma, as well as some texts on analyzing images.

No knowledge of Japan or Japanese required. However, there is the possibility of an additional credit hour for students who can read Japanese and are interested in looking at the materials in the original language. Please contact the professor if you are interested.

Course texts:
Murakami Haruki, After the Quake
Elmer Luke & David Karashima, eds., March Was Made of Yarn
Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others

For all other texts, see Blackboard (BB), or the online journal Japan Focus (japanfocus.org) (JF)

Course requirements:
In order to pass the class you must complete all of the requirements

Participation 10%
Short Papers (3 five page papers) 45%
Photo Essay 20%
Quotations & Final Quotation Analysis 25%

You are expected to do your own work for this class. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. You will also be reported to the Honor Council for disciplinary action. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism or how to document a source, please come see me. Also, anyone using the course fora (blackboard, wiki, email) for inappropriate and disruptive purposes will be given a grade of 0 for the class and will face disciplinary action.

Late Policy: all late assignments will be graded down a half-letter grade per day = 5 points per day.
Absence policy: more than 7 unexcused absences will result in an F for the course.

Participation:
You are expected to have read the material and come to class prepared to share your views with your classmates. You can only get full credit for this portion of the grade if you come to class and actively participate in the discussion. I am interested in hearing your views. Learning happens in a community and I will work to make the classroom a supportive and comfortable environment for everyone.

Attendance will be taken daily and participation graded on the following scale:
0 = in class but did not participate
1 = contributed to class discussion
2 = made a significant contribution to class discussion

Short Papers (5 pages): Write 3 of the 4 papers.
There will be 3 short paper assignments for this class on the following themes:
1. A comparison of the themes of destruction in sci-fi films with reference to Sontag’s essay (DUE week 4)
2. An analysis of the literary imagination of disaster with reference to trauma theory (DUE week 7)
3. An analysis of images of disaster in films and photography (DUE week 10)
4. A comparison of local vs. outsider perspectives on 3/11 (DUE week 13)
I'm most interested in a detailed analysis including scene or textual analysis. Your grade will be based on how effectively you argue your case. More details to come later. All papers are Due Fridays at 5:00pm unless otherwise noted.

Photo Essay and in-class presentation:
Your final project for this class will be a photo essay on disaster in Japan. We will look at examples of photo essays and do a photo essay workshop. The last week of class you will present a preview of your photo essay. The final products is due during exams and will be posted to a public website. More details to follow.

Quotations & Final Quotation Analysis (2-3 pages):
Students are also required to bring in a quotation per week for the weeks in which we read primary sources (approximately 7-8 weeks). Your quotation should demonstrate a discussion point or key theme for that week. Late homework is not accepted. At the end of the class you will write a final analysis of common themes that emerged in these quotations. The final analysis is due the last week of classes when we will have a group discussion about them.

Late Policy: all late assignments will be graded down a half-letter grade per day = 5 points per day.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
(subject to change)

Week 1: Class introduction
8/30

Week 2: The Sci-fi Imagination of Disaster
9/3  Screening for Godzilla 6:30-9:00pm, Washington 301
9/4  Susan Sontag, “The Imagination of Disaster” (BB)
      Godzilla (1954, 96 min)
      Yomota Inuhiko, “A Menace from the South Seas: Honda Ishiro’s Godzilla (1954)”

      Screening for Akira 9/4, 6:30-9:00pm, Washington 301
6  Akira (1988, 124 min)
      Freda Freiberg, “Akira and the Postnuclear Sublime”

Week 3: The Sci-fi Imagination of Disaster
10  Screening for Sinking of Japan 9/10, 6:30-9:00pm, Washington 301
11  Sinking of Japan (2006, 135 min)
      Susan Napier, “Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from Godzilla to Akira” (BB)
      Ide Kazuko, “Japan Sinking? Sequel to 1970s Novel finds Japan Sunk and the Japanese Scattered” (JF)
      Mark Schilling, “The Sinking of Japan” (JF)
      Jessica Langer, “Three versions of Komatsu Saykō’s Nihon chinbotsu (Japan Sinks)” (BB) (read pages 7-14)
13  Tawada Yoko, “The Island of Eternal Life” (12 pp)
      Akikawa Tetsuya, “Box Story” (6pp.)

Week 4: The Literary Imagination of Disaster
18  Kamo no Chomei, “Account of a Ten-Foot Square Hut” (12pp)(BB)
      Akutagawa Ryunosuke, “Earthquake Miscellany” (4pp) (BB)
      Kikuchi Kan, “Post-disaster Impressions” (4pp) (BB)
      Kawabata Yasunari, The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa (pages 59-67) (BB)
20  Hirano Keiichiro, “Tsunami” (4pp) (BB)

21  DUE: Paper #1

Week 5: The Kobe Quake
25, 27  Murakami Haruki, After the Quake (read all stories except “All God’s Children Can Dance”)
Week 6: Theory: Disaster as Cultural Trauma
Oct 2
Jeffrey Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma”
Jeffrey Alexander & Elizabeth Butler Breese, “On Social Suffering and Its Cultural Construction”

4
Neil J. Smelser, “Epilogue: September 11, 2001, as Cultural Trauma”
Azuma Hiroki and Wago Ryoichi, “Thinking from Fukushima about the Power of Words” (abstract)

Week 7: 3/11: The Author Responds/ The Outsider Looks In
9
Nakamura Fuminori, “When the Earthquake Hit” (3pp) (BB)
Ichikawa Makoto, “A Mire and a Shovel” (4pp) (BB)
Furukawa Hideo, “Family Trees and Other Conversations (3pp) (BB)
Furukawa Hideo & Shigematsu Kiyoshi, “Like a Cow Like a Horse” (5pp) (BB)
Murakami Haruki “Speaking as an Unrealistic Dreamer” (JF)

11
Shigematsu Kiyoshi, “The Charm” (22pp)
Murakami Ryu, “Little Eucalyptus Leaves” (8 pp) & NYT editorial

12
DUE: Paper #2

Week 8: Images and Voyeurism
16
No class Fall Break!
18
Sontag, Susan, Regarding the Pain of Others (selections)

Week 9: Cinematic Images of 3/11
22
Screening for No Man’s Zone, 6:30-9:00, Washington 302
23
Fujiwara Toshi, No Man’s Zone (2011) Film
25
Mori Yoshitaka 311 (tentative)

2/26
Last day to withdraw

Week 10: 3/11 as Image
30
Photographs from AERA’s Higashi Nihon Daishinsai
Rebecca Jennison, “‘Revelations from the Sea’: An Artist’s Response to the Disasters of March 11th, 2011” (JF)
Selection from Practices of Looking
Nov 1
Photo Essay Workshop

2
DUE: Paper #3

Week 11: 3/11 as Local Disaster
6
Furukawa Hideo, “Sixteen Years Later, In the Same Place” (10pp)
Ikezawa Natsuki, “Grandma’s Bible” (14pp)
8
Shigematsu Kiyoshi, “To the Next Spring—Obon” (19pp) (BB)
Week 12: 3/11 as Local Disaster
13 Saeki Kazumi, “Hiyoriyama” (20pp)
15 Ishii Shinji, “Lulu” (22pp)
Wago Ryoichi, “Pebbles of Poetry: The Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami” (4 pp)(JF and BB)

Week 13: 3/11 as After Effect
20 Abe Katsushige “Ride on Time” (6 pp)
Matsuda Aoko, “Planting” (6 pp) (BB)
Kawakami Mieko, “March Yarn” (16pp)
22 No class Thanksgiving break
23 DUE: Paper #4

Week 14: Art, Music and the Anti-Nuclear
27 Chim Pom/Linda Hoaglund, “The Suddenly Relevant Activist Antics of Artist Collective Chim↑Pom: Challenging Japan’s Nuclear Power Agenda” (JF)
“Art After Fukushima: Godzilla’s Grandchildren,” The Economist (BB)
Kawakami Hiromi, “God Bless You, 2011” (18pp)
29 Noriko Manabe, The No Nukes 2012 Concert and the Role of Musicians in the Anti-Nuclear Movement” (JF)
Matthew Penny, “Songs for Fukushima” (JF)

Week 15: Wrap up
Dec 4 In class presentation of photo essays
6 Discussion of final analysis of weekly quotations.
7 DUE: Final Quotation Analysis

December 17 DUE: Photo Essay