

# Japanese Literature as speculative: imagining histories, the family, the body and sexuality

Professor Tim Cross, Ph. D

<https://fukuoka-u.academia.edu/ティムクロス>

tim AT fukuoka-u.ac.jp (No spaces before/after the @ mark)

## 1 Course Outline

This Japanese literature course surveys late-Showa short stories. The course is suitable for students who are interested in examining how Japanese literature supports and subverts the idea of national culture. Thematically, literary analysis examines areas such as imagining histories, the family, the body, and sexuality.

Our overall concern is with the question of how Japanese literature is part in social change. This means we need to ask questions that do more than consider the aesthetic decisions authors make as they choose between different genres of stories and different forms of literary presentation (Why is the story designed this way? Can we imagine a different form for this story?). We will hopefully be able to read a range of stories as examples of the tension between support and critique of the idea of Japanese national identity (What should we do about this story?). Close readings of those short stories will be our primary mode of advance.

## 2 Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to compare several of the texts examined in class in terms of a pre-selected theme. This course is an opportunity to enhance your knowledge of modern Japanese literature, across the genres of short story, novel, autobiography, and non-fiction. This course is designed to develop your ability to read and discuss Japanese literature critically. You will be required to write critically and succinctly about the various genres we examine.

Let me decode the previous paragraph: the real course objective is to enjoy talking about Japanese literature. There will be plenty of time for small group discussions, and you will have the chance to deliver a review of any Japanese novel outside of the course readings that has intrigued/puzzled/annoyed you.

## 3 Course Assessment

For 2 credits

(1) Weekly readings, PowerPoint and pre-class quiz preparation, discussions, novel review, and homework 70%

(2) Final Paper: you are free to determine your own topic, essay question and mode of writing 30%

(This course is also available for 3 credits. In that case, the Final Paper would need to be longer.)

## 4 Organization, Attendance and Other Requirements

This course consists of discussions, centred on close readings of literary texts (the short stories). You must have read the short story *before* class. Classes will generally start with a short quiz; this gives all students the opportunity to demonstrate that they have done the reading homework.

The specific details will be finalized in our first meeting but one or more students will be responsible for preparing the PowerPoint for each class. That PowerPoint will start with a short quiz (Who is in the story? What do they do?), then introduce the author and identify key themes in their work, before presenting a series of discussion questions. Those discussion questions might start with a focus on the world inside that story and then move to examining how that story works as a comment on life in late-Showa Japan.

In extreme cases of excessive absences and/or tardy attendance, it is possible that student attendance will be assessed by strictly following the relevant section of the JTW Rules and Policies.

In the event that you cannot attend class because of sickness or family emergency, please send me an quick email *before* class.

As preparation for the first session, please make a list of questions that outline any areas of interest that you would like to explore in depth in this course.

## **5 Textbook**

*Speculative Japan: Outstanding Tales of Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy*

Gene van Troyer and Grania Davis

ISBN-10: 4902075261

Kurodahan Press

## **6 Communications**

Please refer to the top of this page for my email address.

## **7 Pre-requisites**

Apart from the ability to do the required reading in English for homework, none. As English is the language of instruction, this course is structured on the assumption that students have no working knowledge of Japanese. Japanese students are welcome.

## **8 The syllabus (Tentative and speculative)**

### **Session 1**

Course overview, expressions of student interest.

According to The School of Life, What is literature for? (PowerPoint)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RCFLobfqcw&t=8s>

What makes a good discussion question? (PowerPoint)

What should a good reader do? (PowerPoint)

### **Session 2**

Breaking the mould: your homework is reading these links

<http://nobelprize.org/literature/laureates/1968/kawabata-lecture.html>

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

### **Session 3**

Making sense of literature: new criticism, reader-response criticism, deconstruction, new historical criticism, psychological criticism, feminist criticism. Six ways to read (PowerPoint)

*WUBC* reading Murakami 6 ways (PowerPoint)

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

### **Session 4**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

### **Session 5**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 6**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 7**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 8**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 9**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 10**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 11**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 12**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 13**

Quiz, questions and answers, student-led discussion of that week's short story and its relationship to Japanese society and history.

PowerPoint presentation of a review of any Japanese novel outside-of-the-course readings.

**Session 14**

Presentations of final papers.

**Session 15**

Presentations of final papers.

Please note that this is a tentative schedule, and will definitely be subject to changes.