CIEE Kyoto, Japan

**Course title:** Analysis of Japanese Popular Culture  
**Course code:** EAST 3001 KYJA  
**Programs offering course:** Ancient and Modern Japan  
**Language of instruction:** English  
**U.S. semester credits:** 3.00  
**Contact hours:** 45.00  
**Term:** Spring 2021

**Course Description**

This course will provide students with the conceptual tools which will allow for a careful analysis of popular culture in Japanese society. Students will be provided with opportunities to engage with the imagination, emotions, aesthetics, and technologies within the various facets of Japanese popular culture, all of which can be found in the various forms of media such as music, film, literature, and fashion. Students will also have the opportunity to reflect and analyze their experiences of Japanese popular culture based on dialogic, reflective, and cooperative learning.

**Learning Objectives**

By completing this course, students will:

- Understand different perspectives on contemporary Japanese popular music and culture.
- Analyze cultural phenomena through a range of theoretical lenses.
- Critique and deconstruct terms, concepts, and techniques employed in creating connections between cultural products and audiences.
- Apply a variety of analytical approaches to primary sources, developing original research outputs.

**Course Prerequisites**

Previous completion of an introductory course related to Japanese popular culture or popular culture studies is recommended.

**Methods of Instruction**

This course will incorporate in-class lectures, discussions, readings, videos, and field research.

**Assessment and Final Grade**

1. Online Journal  
2. Midterm Paper  
3. Project Presentation  
4. Final Exam  
5. Class Participation  

TOTAL 100%

**Course Requirements**

**Online Journal**

You will be expected to post a short journal entry of 125 to 150 words to the online discussion group by 11:59pm about the readings assigned that day. You must also respond to at least two posts made by two different classmates to generate discussion online. These posts and responses will aid in the in-class discussion to be held the following day.

**Midterm Paper**

You will write a scholarly essay of 1500 to 2000 words in which you develop a critical argument about a topic
related to the course, subject to instructor approval. Your paper must demonstrate sufficient understanding of key concepts explored in class, and must follow conventions of academic writing.

**Project Presentation**

You will perform an in-class presentation on a topic of your choosing, which relates to materials of the course. Depending on class enrollment you will conduct your research either individually or as a group. You must submit a proposal for a presentation that would be no longer than 15 minutes. Have your topic approved by the instructor by Week 6. The proposal should be 750 to 1000 words and include (1) Topic you will present on; (2) How it is relevant to the course; (3) The critical viewpoints that you hope to discover through research and share with the class; and (4) An outline of how your presentation will be structured. Your Proposal is 25% of the Project Presentation grade.

Depending on the nature of their project, students may be required to use out-of-class time to make field visits, or to explore library and other resources. Students will be advised on their project proposal in terms of how to organize such out-of-class work.

**Final Exam**

You will write short essays in answer to three questions prompted by the instructor. Each answer must be 500 to 600 words (total word count of 1500 to 1800 words). Your answers must demonstrate sufficient understanding of key concepts explored in class and must follow conventions of academic writing.

**Class Participation**

You are expected to follow CIEE’s attendance and participation policies as outlined in the CIEE Academic Manual for students.

**Attendance**

You are expected to follow CIEE’s attendance and participation policies as outlined in the CIEE Academic Manual for students.

*N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.*

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class: 1.1  Unpacking “Japanese” “popular” “culture”

- Popular culture and the fame of Japan
  - Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 1.1  Introduction

- Course overview
- No readings

Class: 1.3  Unpacking “Japanese” “popular” “culture” (cont.)

- How “Japanese” is Japanese popular culture?
  - Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Week 2**

Class: 2.1  Popular Music and Authenticity
Nostalgia, intimacy, authenticity in enka.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 2.2 Popular Music and Authenticity (cont.)

Music, language, and race: how “Japanese” is enka?

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 2.3 Popular Music and Authenticity (cont.)

Rock and colonialism in Okinawa

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 9.2 Platforms

“Media mix” revisited.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Week 3

Class: 3.1 Participation and the practice of “media mix”

Fan activity and youth culture.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 3.2 Convergence culture

Popular culture from bottom up.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 3.3 “Media mix” and marketing discourses.

Popular culture through institutional process.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Week 4

Class: 4.1 Idol Culture, 1

Overview of Japanese idol culture.

Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 4.2 Idol Culture, 1 (cont.)

Institutional structures in Japanese idol culture.
- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 4.3 Idol Culture, 1 (cont.)

Idols, television and advertising.
- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Week 5

Class: 5.1 Idol Culture, 2

Idols, fandom, and fantasy.
- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 5.2 Idol Culture, 2 (cont.)

Idols as mediators of society.
- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 5.3 Idol Culture, 2 (cont.)

Idol fans and fan idols. Fandom as labor.
- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Week 6

Class: 6.1 Globalization, 1

Cultural globalization
- PROJECT PROPOSAL Due
- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 6.2 Globalization, 1 (cont.)

In-Class Screening and Discussion: Global Metal (S. McFadyen and S. Dunn, dir., 2007)
- No Readings

Class: 6.3 Globalization, 1 (cont.)
Week 7
Class: 7.1 Globalization, 2

Global circulation of Japanese fashion: Gothic/Lolita


Class: 7.2 Globalization, 2 (cont.)

Politics of cultural appropriation


Class: 7.3 Globalization, 2 (cont.)

Appropriating cultural appropriation


Week 8
Class: 8.1 Otaku Culture

The changing images of otaku.


Class: 8.2 Otaku Culture (cont.)

- In-class screening and discussion: Otaku no Video (T. Mori, dir., 1991)
- No readings

Class: 8.3 Otaku Culture (cont.)

Anonymity and virtual communication.


Week 9
Class: 9.1 Consumption and Popular Culture

Theory of “narrative consumption.”


Class: 9.3 Platforms (cont.)
Mobile platforms. i-mode and the history of the idea of ‘platform.’

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Week 10**

**Class: 10.1 Technologies of Reading/Seeing**

Texts and events of contact in video streaming sites.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Class: 10.2 Popular Literature**

Patterns of textuality in keitai shosetsu (the cellphone novel).

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Class: 10.3 Popular Photography**

Purikura (‘print club’) and affective labor.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Week 11**

**Class: 11.1 Technologies of Listening**

The Walkman effect. Individualism, consumption, and music.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Class: 11.2 Technologies of Listening (cont.)**

Muzak as a platform of affect management. Sounds and social relations.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Class: 11.3 Technologies of Listening (cont.)**

Distant intimacy through sounds.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

**Week 12**

**Class: 12.1 Technologies of Singing**

The history of karaoke.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal
Karaoke and the 'space' of popular music.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class:  12.3 Technologies of Singing (cont.)

- FIELD TRIP: visit karaoke establishment(s)
- No readings

Week 13

Class:  13.1 Voice, Fame, and Collaborative Creativity

Virtual idols and peer production.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class:  13.2 Vocaloids and Participatory Culture

The Kagerou Project.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class:  13.3 Culture of Voice Acting

Voice acting as an interface between fans and characters.


 Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Week 14

Class:  14.1 Popular Protest Through Music

Music performance in anti-nuclear protest.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class:  14.2 Project Presentations

Students will present their research projects in class.

- No Readings

Class:  14.3 Project Presentations (cont.)

Students will present their research projects in class.

- No Readings

Week 15
The folk song movement in the 1960s.

- Homework due 11:59pm: Online Journal

Class: 15.2 Final Exam Workshop

Final exam questions will be distributed and discussed in class.

- No Readings

Class: 15.3 FINAL EXAM

Course Materials

Readings

- Global Metal. 2007. Dir. Scot McFadyen and Sam Dunn. Seville Pictures. DVD.