Introduction to Japanese Cinema

Dr. C.J. Boland

Course Overview

Introduction to Japanese Cinema is a three-credit interdisciplinary culture studies course that examines Japan's world-renowned cinematic output over the last one hundred years. The central philosophy behind the course is that an interdisciplinary and historically grounded study of an evolved modality of cultural production (e.g. film) has the potential to enhance our understanding of the originating society.

The defining developmental phases and 'golden era' of Japanese cinema will be represented through a series of retrospective case studies that consider the work of particular studios, auteur directors and their landmark films. Each case study will contextualize the examination of film industry practices and aesthetic developments against the socio-cultural background of a particular period (e.g. post-war/late modern, postmodern). This review will be complemented by critical readings of selected 'representative' films, applying salient conceptual frameworks from film studies to support the analysis.

While the broad interdisciplinary approach of this course differentiates it from the typically narrower foci of traditional film studies, students will still be expected to engage in the critical analysis of films and apply the theory and conceptual language introduced in class.

Each class session will be around four hours in duration. The session will usually start with a lecture, followed by film screenings and ended with a class discussion. A course text and/or reading materials will be supplied. Students will be expected to prepare for class and participate actively in discussions.

Assessment

The assessment will be structured as follows:

1. Individual Presentation on a Japanese Film or Director*.
2. A Blog Article based on the presentation topic.
3. Final Examination (essay style questions).

*While the course does not cover animation feature films, students will be permitted (subject to approval) to research a presentation topic based on selected works from this genre.