UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Cultura contemporanea giapponese

2526-1055-GIAPP-CONTEMP

Course title

Contemporary Japanese Culture

Topics and course structure

The course consists of four lecture-style classes.

The lectures include:

An introduction to contemporary Japanese culture, with particular attention to literature, cinema, and art, contextualized within the historical, social, and media landscape in which they developed.

An introduction to key theoretical and interpretive concepts for understanding contemporary Japanese cultural production, especially popular forms related to the entertainment industry (manga, anime, video games, etc.).

Objectives

To provide students with basic knowledge of key aspects of contemporary Japanese culture and its resonance abroad, thereby enriching their foundational understanding necessary for effective communication.

To equip students with essential theoretical tools for critically interpreting the diverse expressions of contemporary Japanese culture and its reception overseas.

Methodologies

Lecture-style classes supported by slides, reading of texts, and the projection of images and videos.

Online and offline teaching materials

Students will have access to:

Slides and handouts provided by the instructor

Texts read in class and videos viewed

Recordings of the lectures

Links to online tools useful for translation

Recommended readings

Programme and references

Slot 1:
General Introduction
Contemporary Japanese Literature

Slot 2:
Contemporary Japanese Literature / Contemporary Japanese Cinema

Slot 3:
Contemporary Japanese Cinema / Contemporary Japanese Art

Slot 4:
Contemporary Japanese Art
Student presentations for assessment purposes

Essential bibliography for further study

General texts on contemporary Japanese culture and pop culture, or on some of its major aspects:

A. Allison, Millenial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination, University of California Press, 2006.
M. Alt, Pop - Come la cultura giapponese ha conquistato il mondo, ADD Editore 2023 (2020)
M. Casari (a cura di), Culture del Giappone Contemporaneo, Tunué 2011
G. Coci (a cura di), Japan Pop - Parole, immagini, suoni dal Giappone contemporaneo, Aracne 2013
A. Freedman, T. Slade, Introducing Japanese Popular Culture, Routledge, 2018A. A. Gomarasca, La bambola e il robottone - Culture pop nel Giappone contemporaneo, Einaudi 2001
I. Koichi, Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism, Duke University Press 2002
S. J. Napier, From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West, Palgrave MacMillan 2008
M. Steinberg, Anime system. Il successo polimediale dell'animazione giapponese, Tunué 2025 (2012)

Literature:
L. Bienati (a cura di), Letteratura giapponese II, Dalla fine dell'Ottocento all'inizio del terzo millennio, Einaudi 2005
L. Bienati, P. Scrolavezza, La narrativa giapponese moderna e contemporanea, Marsilio 2009
G. M. Follaco (a cura di), Cultura letteraria Giapponese, Hoepli 2023

Cinema:
G. Calorio, To the Digital Observer - Il cinema giapponese contemporaneo attraverso il monitor, Mimesis 2018
M. R. Novielli, Storia del cinema giapponese, Marsilio 2001
M. R. Novielli, Storia del cinema giapponese nel nuovo millennio, Marsilio 2022
D. Tomasi, M. Dalla Gassa, Il cinema dell'estremo oriente, Utet 2010
I. Yomota, What is Japanese Cinema? A History, Columbia University Press 2019

Art:
D. Elliott, Bye Bye Kitty!!! - Between Heaven and Hell in Contemporary Japanese Art, Yale University Press 2011
F. Fabbri, Lo zen e il manga - Arte contemporanea giapponese, Bruno Mondadori, 2009
Favell, Before and After Superflat - A Short History of Japanese Contemporary Art 1990-2011, Blue Kingfisher 2011

Assessment methods

Type of Assessment
The exam will consist of a ten-minute presentation that students will deliver, either individually or in pairs/groups of two or three, during the final hour of the last class session. The presentation may focus on a work, an author, a theme, or a phenomenon discussed in class, but it may also address another type of work (anime, manga, video games, music, theater, fashion, etc.): anything related to contemporary Japanese culture that you consider interesting to examine and share with the class.

Students must demonstrate their ability to analyze, contextualize, and present the chosen topic by drawing on what they have learned in class and, in parallel, through their own independent research.

If a student is unable to attend the final class, they must submit a written assignment of between 5,000 and 6,000 characters, excluding bibliographic references. More specific instructions (length, approach, etc.) will be provided later, both in class and through the e-learning page.

Evaluation Criteria

Assessment will be based on research and analytical skills, the structure of the presentation, originality of the topic, and the quality of the delivery (oral or written).

Office hours

By appointment at the following Webex address: https://unimib.webex.com/meet/giacomo.calorio

Programme validity

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION