

Fall 2016
TR 1:10-2:25, Buttrick 222
Office Hours: TR, 10:30-Noon

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Asian Studies 1111-01 Self & Cyborg in Japanese Animation

Course manifesto

Animated films and TV programs (anime) rank among contemporary Japan's most prominent global exports and most important domestic media products. The range of audience and content in anime—from cartoony kid shows to sophisticated feature films to fantastical romances to philosophically complex SF to stomach-churning violent pornography—render it a significant object of study as a product of the “information society” of late capitalist, postmodern Japan. Many anime treat themes associated with serious art and thus require us to take them seriously even as we enjoy them as “simple” entertainment. While one risks taking the enjoyment out of any pop cultural form by submitting it to academic scrutiny, we will engage our study of anime in the belief that close analysis of anime will enhance our enjoyment of it. In this course we will be treating some of the medium's most challenging examples that deal with issues of human consciousness, selfhood, reality versus illusion, and human-machine relations.

Can one be human in a non-human body? At what point do technological enhancements to the body diminish one's humanity? To what extent can an artificial intelligence develop a sense of self? What is the relationship between body, mind, self, memory, and identity? How do visual and electronic media construct and deconstruct self-identity? Does reality matter if a simulation is realistic and you don't realize it's a simulation? Who are you? These are but a few questions that this course tackles through the medium of Japanese animation (anime), examples of which are well known for taking up philosophical and psychological issues such as these. Those anime that this course focuses on represent some of the most thought-provoking work created for feature-length theatrical release and for TV series broadcasts in Japan. We will look at the works of Kon Satoshi (*Magnetic Rose*, *Perfect Blue*, *Millennium Actress*, *Paranoia Agent*, *Paprika*); Oshii Mamoru (*Ghost in the Shell*, *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, *Avalon*); Nakamura Ryutaro (*Serial Experiments Lain*); and Yoshiura Yasuhiro (*Time of Eve*).

In addition to being objects of study in their own right, these anime will serve as materials through which students will practice their analytical and critical writing skills in this First-Year Writing Seminar.

Course material

Osmond, Andrew. *Satoshi Kon, The Illusionist* (required, in bookstore)
Electronic Readings (required, on Blackboard and figal-sensei.org under Readings)
Web links to articles and info (required on Blackboard and figal-sensei.org under Links)
Required screenings of anime on Tuesday evenings (and a few Thursdays) in Cohen Hall 203, 7-9PM.

Course work

1. **Regular class attendance and participation** in class and in on-line forums at figal-sensei.org. This is a seminar, which means less lecture and more focused discussion by class members of the assigned readings and viewings. Everyone must read/view material and everyone must participate to make the seminar work. Online responses to questions about our viewings and readings are required. To participate in the online forums you must first **register on figal-sensei.org**. Simply click “register” on the navigation bar and follow instructions. Please use your preferred given name when registering so that others can identify you easily in discussion threads. You may use any convenient email address (that works!).

2. **Two essays** (five pages each, typed, double space) on topics I will assign related to our readings and viewings. The first of these essays will be re-written after you have met with me to discuss it. The second essay will be revised after you receive written comments. Re-writes should re-take as much time and effort as the original essay. I will grade only the revisions but in relation to the first draft. Students should refer to the *The Bedford Handbook for Writers* for extra guidance. I have linked a free PDF version of it under Readings at figal-sensei.org. You may also visit the Writing Studio in 217 of The Commons Center. See more information for that at: www.vanderbilt.edu/writing/.

3. **Conferences**. There will be a required conference before you do your first re-write. I will also meet with you anytime during my office hours at your request for help with writing or course material.

4. **Take-home final essay**. This will be a 5- to 7-page essay reflecting on the main themes, viewings, and readings for the course. I will determine a choice of topics that will be wider-ranging than the first two papers. Each student will incorporate their draft ideas for their final essay into the final week’s reflections on the course material. It will be due by 2PM, Tuesday, December 13.

Grading breakdown:

Class participation	15%
Online response writings	10%
Essay # 1	25%
Essay # 2	25%
Take-home Final Essay	25%

Papers must be typed, double-spaced in a 12-point font with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and stapled. Late papers are penalized one half letter grade per calendar day. Keep all your papers and bring them to any conferences.

Course accommodations

Vanderbilt’s system of alerting faculty of student accommodations (medical, sport travel days, etc.) works pretty well, but if there is anything else that I should know about, please contact me as soon as possible. This includes preferred name and gender pronoun. The official class roster lists the student’s legal name. I will honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun if you let me know. We have at home, for example, a biologically male cat (Stella) who prefers “she” and “her.”

Finally and Importantly:

Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and a referral to the University Honor Council.

Vanderbilt University’s Honor Code governs all work done in this course

Refer to <https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/honorcouncil/> for details.

Course Trajectory
(subject to deviations)

All screenings are Tuesdays 7-9PM in Cohen Hall 203 unless otherwise noted

NOTE: Electronic Readings (ER) and Web Links (WL) are on both Blackboard and figal-sensei.org.

Act I: The Mediated & Delusional Self

Week 1 (8/25)	Th.	Orientations: Deep Anime & The First-Year Writing Seminar
Week 2 (8/30-9/1)	Tu.	Intro to Kon Satoshi, <i>Magnetic Rose</i> (screening in class)
	Th.	Discussion of <i>Magnetic Rose</i>
reading:	Th.	Osmond, <i>Satoshi Kon</i> , chapter 1
Week 3 (9/6-8)	Tu.	Kon Satoshi, <i>Perfect Blue</i>
	Th.	Discussion of <i>Perfect Blue</i> ; Celluloid Selves: <i>Millennium Actress</i>
reading:	Tu.	Osmond, <i>Satoshi Kon</i> , chapter 2
	Th :	Napier, "'Excuse Me, Who Are You?': Performance, the Gaze, and the Female in the Works of Satoshi Kon" (ER)
Week 4 (9/13-15)	Tu.	Library Session (screening of <i>Millennium Actress</i> 7-9PM)
	Th.	Discussion of <i>Millennium Actress</i>
reading:	Tu.	Interview with Kon Satoshi on <i>Millennium Actress</i> (WL)
	Th.	Osmond, <i>Satoshi Kon</i> , chapter 3
Week 5 (9/20-22)	Tu.	Mass-consumed Selves: <i>Paranoia Agent</i> (eps. 1-2 in class) (<i>Paranoia Agent</i> eps. 3-6 at screening time)
	Th.	<i>Paranoia Agent</i> (ep. 7 in class); discussion of first half of series
viewing:	Th.	Interview with Kon Satoshi on <i>Paranoia Agent</i> (WL)
Week 6 (9/27-29)	Tu.	<i>Paranoia Agent</i> (eps. 8-9 in class) (<i>Paranoia Agent</i> eps. 10-13 at screening time)
	Th.	Discussion of <i>Paranoia Agent</i> complete
reading:	Th.	Osmond, <i>Satoshi Kon</i> , chapter 5
		Figal, "Monstrous Media and Delusional Consumption in Kon Satoshi's <i>Paranoia Agent</i> " (ER)
Week 7 (10/4-6)	Tu.	Dream/Film/Anime: <i>Paprika</i>
	Th.	Discussion of <i>Paprika</i>
reading:	Th.	Osmond, <i>Satoshi Kon</i> , chapter 6
viewing:	Th.	The Making of <i>Paprika</i> , Part 1 (WL)
		The Making of <i>Paprika</i> , Part 2 (WL)
		ESSAY #1 DUE IN CLASS TUESDAY 10/4
Week 8 (10/11-13)		No Class: Conferences Monday to Wednesday
		No screening this week
		Fall Break 10/13-14

Act 2: The Cyborg & Posthuman Self

Week 9 (10/18-20)	Tu. Th.	Intro to Oshii Mamoru; Cyborg Subjectivity: <i>Ghost in the Shell</i> Discussion of <i>GITS</i> ESSAY #1 Rewrite Due One Week After Conference
Week 10 (10/25-27)	Tu. Th. Th.	Posthuman Subjectivity: <i>Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence</i> Discussion of <i>GITS2</i> Orbaugh, "Emotional Infectivity: Cyborg Affect and the Limits of the Human" (ER)
Week 11 (11/1-3)	Tu. Th. Th.	The Animation-Live Action Convergence: <i>Avalon</i> Discussion of <i>Avalon</i> Ruh, "Avalon (2000)" (ER)
Week 12 (11/8-10)	Tu. Th. Th.	<i>Serial Experiments: Lain</i> (1-2 in class; 3-6 at screening); <i>SEL</i> (ep. 7 in class)/Discussion of first half of <i>SEL</i> <i>Serial Experiments: Lain</i> Wikipedia Guide (WL) ESSAY #2 DUE IN CLASS ON TUESDAY 11/8
Week 13 (11/15-17)	Tu. Th. Th.	<i>Serial Experiments: Lain</i> (eps. 8-9 in class; eps. 10-13 at screening) Discussion of <i>Serial Experiments: Lain</i> Prévost, "The Signal of Noise" (ER) ESSAY #2 handed back with comments Topics for Final Essay handed out
Week 14		<THANKSGIVING BREAK>
Week 15 (11/29-12/1)	Tu. Th.	Library Research Exercise Reports; <i>Time of Eve: The Movie</i> Discussion of <i>Time of Eve</i> ; ESSAY #2 Rewrite Due in Class
Week 16 (12/6-8)	Tu. Th.	Reflections Wrap-up Final Essay Due by Noon Monday, December 12