

**ASIA 2512: Explorations of Japanese Animation**  
**Midterm Essay, DUE BY CLASS TIME, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28**

Select **ONE** of the following prompts and compose an interesting, well-written essay of about 1200-1500 words. Cite ALL of the written sources you use in parenthetical references noting author, title, page number. Draw on any and all of the course materials—written and visual—through February 23. Stick to our course readings and viewings—this is not an exercise in researching what others have said; plagiarism from any source will be dealt with seriously. This is an opportunity for you to impress me with your insights and your ability to articulate them. Please indicate the prompt you are responding to and name your file in the form **lastname-MT.doc** (or .docx or .pages or .pdf) and email it as attachment to: [upload.Midterm.q59r0sjpmc@u.box.com](mailto:upload.Midterm.q59r0sjpmc@u.box.com)

1. There is nothing that says that Japanese animation should always be explicitly about Japan or should display in them only Japanese characters and locales. In fact, there are a lot of elements foreign to Japan (or to the real world, for that matter!) in much Japanese animation. Consider how these foreign elements (think expansively in this regard) function in at least three works we have watched. For example, are they associated with a particular meaning or do they achieve a particular effect in their foreignness? Do they work in relationship to Japanese elements and how? Are there actual foreigners and if so, what are their roles? Etc.
2. Select three works and discuss how the familiar and ordinary is made unfamiliar and extraordinary. In other words, how are they “defamiliarized.” To what effects and for what ends does this happen? Does such defamiliarization, for example, open up a critical perspective on things that are usually taken for granted, and if so, what is the content of such critical commentary? Try to consider issues of form (style, techniques of animation, etc.) as well as content (characters, story, setting, theme, etc.) in your analysis. And strive to go beyond what we have already discussed in class or through Response Writings.
3. Power takes many forms and it is put to many uses. Select three films we have watched (at least one must NOT be by Miyazaki) and discuss the sources and uses of power in each. Consider such things as: Who has access to power? What is the context for it? How is it harnessed? How is it deployed? For what purpose is it used? What are its effects? Etc. Frame your discussion comparatively between forms of power displayed within one work and/or across works. Are there some general observations or conclusions that you can make?
4. Go to the course web site and, if you haven’t already, download the handout under “Handouts” called “Reading a Film Opening.” Then select three works and analyze their respective openings along the lines given in the handout. You do not have to attend to every single item in the handout, but should be as comprehensive as necessary to discuss the ways in which the opening sets up theme, atmosphere, plot, characters, and so on for the rest of the work. You may discuss the openings comparatively, but are not required to do so. Make good use of the analytical approaches and concerns that you have thus far learned in the course.
5. Go to the course web site and, if you haven’t already, download the handout under “Handouts” called “Reading a Film Sequence.” Then select three works and analyze a scene or sequence in each along the lines given in the handout. You do not have to attend to every single item in the handout, but you should be as comprehensive as necessary to discuss the ways in which the scene or sequence operates and what its function is within the larger work. You may discuss the scenes or sequences comparatively, but are not required to do so. Make good use of the analytical approaches and concerns that you have thus far learned in the course.

NOTE: For options #4 and #5 you should definitely avail yourself to the copies of the videos available online so that you can give a thorough analysis of the openings or scenes you choose. It might also be useful for options #1, #2, and #3 to review all or parts of the works you wish to discuss.