

HIST 459 (Cross-listed as ASIAN 459): Manga and Japanese History

Sample Syllabus

COURSE INFORMATION

Class Days: TBA

Instructor:

Class Times:

Email:

Class Location:

Office location:

Mode of Delivery: In-person

Office hours:

THIS COURSE IN YOUR DEGREE:

Prerequisites: N/A

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course maps a cultural history of modern Japan through representative works of manga (Japanese comics) and selected anime adaptations. Students will analyze manga as primary sources that reflect the array of historical developments, cultural transformations, and socio-political discourses that have played into the construction of “Japan” from the early modern period through the new millennium. Assigned manga represent prominent Japanese historical and artistic themes including the advent of mass print culture; early modern urbanization; shifting moral paradigms; modernizing cultures and counter-cultures in interwar Japan; Japanese imperial violence, national trauma, and rehabilitation of WWII; evolving nuclear discourses from the Allied occupation to the present; shifting gender and sexual paradigms in the postwar decades; the move from the 1980s “miracle economy” to the recessionary 1990s; the rise of public violence in the 1990s; contemporary youth subcultures; and the enduring theme of identity and technology. In exploring these themes, students will consider also how the evolution and expansion of manga across and into an ever-multiplying number of genres reflects evolving paradigms of Japanese subjectivity and social participation, the diverse experiences of individuals and communities inhabiting various axes of identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class), and the desire among pop cultural consumers to engage with the repressed of history and culture.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

DEVELOP a vocabulary for engaging and analyzing, both objectively and subjectively, Japanese sequential art (manga) and its accompanying verbal text.

ANALYZE how manga engages with evolving conceptualizations of Japanese identity and nationhood from the early modern period through the contemporary era.

INTERPRET manga with attention to its diverse sociocultural functions, including entertainment, moral instruction, advertising, propaganda, protest, gender and sexual expression, and (auto)biography.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST how manga produced by different creators and in different time periods engages with significant historical events, developments, and discourses.

EVALUATE the contributions of secondary scholarship to our understanding of how manga informs and is informed by modern Japanese historical developments.

COURSE MATERIALS AND EXPECTATIONS

Students must purchase or access library copies of the following manga titles; approximate prices for new copies are included below. All manga listed below are available at the SDSU library (click links to view library location).

- Mizuki Shigeru, [Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths](#) (ISBN: 978-1770460416), \$24
- Ikeda Riyoko, [The Rose of Versailles Volume 1](#) (ISBN: 978-1927925935), \$40
- Takeuchi Naoko, [Sailor Moon vol. 1](#) (ISBN: 978-1935429746), \$11
- Higashimura Akiko, [Princess Jellyfish vol. 1](#) (ISBN: 978-1632362285), \$20

Other Readings/Viewings: All other assigned materials have been uploaded or linked on the course Canvas site, where they are organized in weekly modules.

Expectations: Students are responsible for completing all assignments by their due dates and for arriving to class prepared for discussion. See descriptions, weights, and rubrics for assignments below.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Pop Quizzes: 15%

To encourage regular attendance, promote close reading, and facilitate engaging class discussion, I will give pop quizzes on assigned readings throughout the semester. The lowest two quiz grades will be dropped.

Article/Chapter Reflections: 20% (4 X 5%)

Students will complete four ~250-word reflections on assigned scholarly articles and book chapters. Each reflection should highlight the author's central argument(s), devote attention to some of the ways in which they develop their argument, and briefly address any strengths and/or weakness of the argument (from your perspective). **Bring a hard copy of your reflections to class on the due dates on the course schedule below.**

Short Analyses: 25% (5 X 5%)

Students will complete five ~250-word assignments requiring them to analyze manga in preparation for class discussion. Prompts for analyses are located on the course schedule below.

Bring a hard copy of your reflections to class on the due dates on the course schedule below. A rubric is provided below:

	A Range	B Range	C Range	D to F Range
Response to Prompt	The analysis responds to the prompt in full, reflecting strong understanding of central textual themes	The analysis responds to the prompt in full, reflecting adequate understanding of central textual themes	The analysis attempts to respond to the prompt but is vague, omitting central textual themes	The analysis strays entirely from the prompt
Historical Context	The analysis places the manga in its historical context, reflecting strong understanding of how specific historical events, developments, and/or discourses inform its themes	The analysis places the manga in its historical context, reflecting adequate understanding of how some specific historical events, developments, and/or discourses inform its themes	The analysis notes the manga's general historical context but lacks specificity	The analysis fails to engage with the manga's historical context
Close Analysis	The analysis provides nuanced close analysis of at least one specific scene, with attention to how textual and visual elements help to develop the manga's overarching theme(s)	The analysis provides close analysis of at least one specific scene, with attention to how textual and visual elements help to develop the manga's overarching theme(s)	The analysis attempts to provide analysis of at least one specific scene but relies largely on synopsis	The analysis fails to provide close analysis of a specific scene

Midterm (20%) and Final (20%) Essays (traditional or [visual essay](#)): 40%

Students will complete two analytical essays of 6-8 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font). These take-home essays will require students to closely analyze 3 assigned manga of the student's choosing, with attention to how they engage with a major Japanese historical development, issue, or debate. Your essay should also engage meaningfully with at least two secondary sources (scholarly article, books, and/or book chapters); these can be sources on the syllabus, or sources you locate on your own. For these essays, you are welcome and encouraged to build on one or more of your shorter writing assignments. Potential essay topics include (but are not limited to): shifting moral paradigms; WWII and/or its aftermath; nuclear discourses; evolving gender and/or sexual roles and relations; evolving paradigms of nation; technology and identity; recessionary Japanese life; youth cultures/subcultures. We will dedicate class time to workshopping your essay drafts. A rubric is provided below:

	A Range	B Range	C Range	D to F Range
Introduction	The essay includes an introductory paragraph(s) that provides a clear, concise overview of the manga and related historical theme(s) the author will explore in their analysis.	The essay includes an introductory paragraph(s) that adequately overviews the manga and related historical theme(s) the author will explore in their analysis.	The essay includes an introductory paragraph(s), but it is vague in its description of the manga and/or historical theme(s) the author will explore in their analysis.	The essay fails to include an introductory paragraph(s).
Content	The essay makes a strong argument concerning the manga and related historical theme(s) it sets out to explore. It avoids generalizations and demonstrates a very strong understanding of the manga analyzed, and of their place in Japanese history. On the whole, the essay achieves its stated aim as described in the introduction.	The essay makes a viable argument concerning the manga and related historical theme(s) it sets out to explore. It mostly avoids generalizations and demonstrates a strong understanding of the manga analyzed, and of their place in Japanese history. On the whole, the essay achieves its stated aim as described in the introduction.	The essay provides some discussion of the manga and related historical theme(s) it sets out to explore. It often relies on generalizations and sometimes fails to demonstrate understanding of the manga analyzed and/or their place in Japanese history. The essay occasionally strays from the main topic.	The essay fails to engage meaningfully with any aspects of the manga analyzed and/or their place in Japanese history. The essay fails to make a cohesive argument.
Engagement With Sources	The essay analyzes a minimum of 3 manga explored in class. It avoids generalizations and demonstrates a very strong understanding of the texts through close analysis of specific elements (language, imagery, scenes, stylistic features, etc.). It explains fully and clearly <i>what</i> each manga reveals about the historical theme being explored. The essay cites at least two scholarly sources and demonstrates a strong understanding of their central arguments and the historical evidence they draw upon. It explains fully and clearly <i>how</i> each	The essay analyzes a minimum of 3 manga explored in class. It mostly avoids generalizations and demonstrates an adequate understanding of the texts through close analysis of specific elements. It explains clearly <i>what</i> each manga reveals about the historical theme being explored. The essay cites at least two scholarly sources and demonstrates basic understanding of their central arguments and the historical evidence they draw upon. It provides a general sense of <i>how</i> each	The essay analyzes some but not all of the 3 required manga explored in class. It relies mostly on generalizations and provides minimal close analysis of specific elements. It fails to adequately explain <i>what</i> each manga reveals about the historical theme being explored. The essay cites one scholarly source and demonstrates basic understanding of its central argument and connection to the theme being explored in the essay.	The essay fails to engage meaningfully with assigned manga and/or scholarly sources.

	source connects to the theme being explored in the essay.	source connects to the theme being explored in the essay.		
Organization and Technical Issues	The organization of the essay is logical and makes it easy for the reader to follow by using paragraph breaks and clear transitions between paragraphs/topics; the essay is virtually free of spelling and grammatical errors.	The organization of the essay makes it mostly easy for the reader to follow; the essay contains some minor spelling and/or grammatical errors.	The organization of the essay makes it sometimes difficult to follow; the essay contains significant spelling and/or grammatical errors.	The organization of the essay makes it extremely difficult to follow; the essay contains errors that obscure the author's meaning.

Number to Letter Grade Conversion: Your final grade in the course will be reflected in letter format. Grades will be converted as follows:

93-100 A
90-92 A-
87-89 B+
83-86 B
80-82 B-
77-79 C+
73-76 C
70-72 C-
67-69 D+
63-66 D
60-62 D-
59 or Below: F

Late Assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted unless an extension is requested and approved **prior to the due date**. Documented medical emergencies and disability accommodations are the only exceptions to this rule. Non-medical/disability extension requests will only be granted for very good reasons.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Schedule of course readings, viewings, and assignments by week.

Week	Reading/Viewings/Class Activities	Assignments
1: Introduction to the Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Overview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the syllabus before our first meeting and arrive prepared to discuss any questions or concerns
2. Manga's Early Modern Antecedent: <i>Kibyōshi</i> ("Yellow Comic Books")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adam Kern, "The <i>Kibyōshi</i>: Japan's Eighteenth-Century Comicbook for Adults" Bakin, "The Vendetta of Mr. Fleacatcher Managorō, The Fifth" 	
3. The Birth of Manga and Comics of Modernity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miyamoto Hirohito and Jennifer Prough, "The Formation of an Impure Genre—On the Origins of 'Manga'" Kitazawa Rakuten, "The Burglaress: A Film Tale" + "Film Without End" + "Modern Mirrored Worlds" (1930s) Okamoto Ippei, "Woman's Hundred Faces" Parts I + II + III (1922) In-class viewing: examples of ukiyo-e, namazu-e, shinbun nishiki-e 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article Reflection #1: Bring to class a ~250-word reflection on "The Formation of an Impure Genre"
4. Manga and the Asia-Pacific War: From Propaganda Comics to Graphic Autobiography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Dower, "The Pure Self" from <i>War Without Mercy</i> Mizuki Shigeru, <i>Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths</i> (1973), 1st half 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article Reflection #2: Bring to class a ~250-word reflection on "The Pure Self"
5. Manga and the Asia-Pacific War Continued + Wartime Transformations in Shōjo (Girls') Manga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mizuki Shigeru, <i>Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths</i>, 2nd half Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, "Girls on the Home Front: An Examination of <i>Shōjo no tomo</i> Magazine, 1937-1945" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short Analysis #1: Bring to class a ~250-word analysis of <i>Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths</i>, with attention to how it portrays the realities of Japanese soldiers' wartime experiences. In your analysis, provide close reading of at least one specific scene.

Week	Reading/Viewings/Class Activities	Assignments
6: Mighty Atom: Envisioning A Nuclear Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tezuka Osamu, Astro Boy Volume 1 (1952-1968), introduction-222 • Alicia Gibson, “Out of Death, an Atomic Consecration to Life: Astro Boy and Hiroshima's Long Shadow” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Analysis #2: Bring to Class a ~250-word analysis of <i>Astro Boy</i>, with attention to how it seeks to divorce nuclear technology from the violence of the atomic bombs. In your analysis, provide close reading of at least one specific scene.
7. Born of Trauma: Atomic Survivors and the Repressed of History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maya Todeschini, “Illegitimate Sufferers: A-Bomb Victims, Medical Science, and the Government” • Nakazawa Keiji, Barefoot Gen vol. 1 (1973-1987), introduction-284 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on midterm essay
8. Peer Review Workshops + Midterm Essay Due This Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-review workshops of midterm essays in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on midterm essay; bring a hard copy to class this week for peer-review workshopping. • Midterm Essay due via Turn it In
9. Gender Debates and Shōjo Manga in the Postwar Decades: Female Agency, Same-Sex Romance, and Alternate Histories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julia C. Bullock, “‘Female Students Ruining the Nation’: The Debate over Coeducation in Postwar Japan” • Ikeda Riyoko, <i>The Rose of Versailles</i> vol. 1 (1972-1973), 1st half 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Analysis #3: Bring to class a ~250-word analysis of <i>The Rose of Versailles</i>, with attention to how it might be said to reflect shifting gender and/or sexual paradigms in postwar Japan. In your analysis, provide close reading of at least one specific scene.
10. Gender Debates and Shōjo Manga in the Postwar Decades Continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Rose of Versailles</i> vol. 1, 2nd half • Deborah Shamoan, “Revolutionary Romance: ‘The Rose of Versailles’ and the Transformation of Shojo Manga” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Reflection #3: Bring to class a ~250-word reflection on “Revolutionary Romance”

Week	Reading/Viewings/Class Activities	Assignments
11. “ <i>Kodomo ga hen da</i> ” (The Kids Have Gone Strange): Violent Eruptions, Media Panic, and Manga in 90s Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class viewing: television interview with Aum founder Asahara Shōkō; images from Japanese news reports on violence and its links to popular media • Yumiko Iida, “Between the Technique of Living and Endless Routine and the Madness of Absolute Degree Zero: Japanese Identity and the Crisis of Modernity in the 1990s” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article Reflection #4: Bring to class a ~250-word reflection on “Between the Technique of Living and Endless Routine...”
12. “Those Who Hate Themselves Cannot Love or Trust Others”: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Shōnen (Boys’) Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class viewing: <i>Evangelion</i> episodes 1-3: “Angel Attack,” “Unfamiliar Ceilings,” and “The Silent Phone” (1995) • Hiroki Azuma, “The Animalization of Otaku Culture” + in-class discussion of <i>Evangelion</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Analysis #4: Bring to class a ~250-word analysis of <i>Evangelion</i>, with attention to how it reflects the growing alienation of youth in the high-tech landscape of contemporary Japan. In your analysis, provide close reading of at least one specific scene.
13. The Age of the Girl: <i>Kawaii</i> (Cute) Culture, Conspicuous Consumption, and the Slippage from Vulnerability and Deviancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takeuchi Naoko, <i>Sailor Moon</i> vol. 1 (1991-1997) • Laura Miller, “Those Naughty Teenage Girls: Japanese Kogals, Slang, and Media Assessments” 	

Week	Reading/Viewings/Class Activities	Assignments
14. The Age of the Girl Redux: The Manga Origins of J-Horror's Monstrous Shōjo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itō Junji, episodes from <i>Tomie</i> (1987-2000) • At-home viewing: Hideo Nakata, Ringu (1997) (to view this film, available via the SDSU library, click the link and use your SDSU credentials to log in) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Analysis #5: Bring to class a ~250-word analysis of <i>Tomie</i> and <i>Ringu</i>, with attention to how these texts use monstrous girls to explore larger anxieties that proliferated in recessionary Japan. In your analysis, provide close reading of at least one specific scene from the manga and the film.
15. Female Otaku, Fujoshi (Rotten Girls), and Contemporary Josei (Ladies') Manga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higashimura Akiko, <i>Princess Jellyfish</i> vol. 1 (2009), 1st half • <i>Princess Jellyfish</i>, 2nd half 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on final essay
16. Peer Review Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-review workshops of final essays in class this week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on final essay; bring a hard copy to class this week for peer-review workshopping.
17. Final Essays Due This Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional final peer-review workshops of final essays during schedule exam date and time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Essay due via Turn it In

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Classroom Conduct Standards: SDSU students are expected to abide by the terms of the [Student Conduct Code](#) in classrooms and other instructional settings. Please closely review the Student Conduct Code linked above. Violation of these standards will result in referral to appropriate campus authorities. Prohibited conduct includes:

Academic Honesty: The University adheres to a strict [policy prohibiting cheating and plagiarism](#). [Examples](#) of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- copying, in part or in whole, from another's test or other examination;
- obtaining copies of a test, an examination, or other course material without the permission of the instructor;

- collaborating with another or others in work to be presented without the permission of the instructor;
- falsifying records, laboratory work, or other course data;
- submitting work previously presented in another course, if contrary to the rules of the course;
- altering or interfering with grading procedures;
- assisting another student in any of the above;
- using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving proper attribution (this can include phrases, sentences, paragraphs and/or pages of work);
- copying and pasting work from an online or offline source directly and calling it your own;
- using information you find from an online or offline source without giving the author credit;
- replacing words or phrases from another source and inserting your own words or phrases.

The California State University system requires instructors to report all instances of academic misconduct to the [Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). Academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary review by the University and may lead to probation, suspension, or expulsion. Instructors may also, at their discretion, penalize student grades on any assignment or assessment discovered to have been produced in an academically dishonest manner.

Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations for this class, please contact [Student Ability Success Center](#) at (619) 594-6473 as soon as possible. Please know accommodations are not retroactive, and I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Ability Success Center.

Medical-Related Absences: Students are instructed to contact their professor/instructor/coach in the event they need to miss class, etc. due to an illness, injury or emergency. All decisions about the impact of an absence, as well as any arrangements for making up work, rest with the instructors. [Student Health Services](#) (SHS) does not provide medical excuses for short-term absences due to illness or injury. When a medical-related absence persists beyond five days, SHS will work with students to provide appropriate documentation. When a student is hospitalized or has a serious, ongoing illness or injury, SHS will, at the student's request and with the student's consent, communicate with the student's instructors via the Vice President for Student Affairs and may communicate with the student's Assistant Dean and/or the [Student Ability Success Center](#).

Religious Observances: According to the University Policy File, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances by the end of the second week of classes.

Academic Resources for Students: A complete list of all academic support services, including the [Writing Center](#), is available on the Division of Student Affairs' [Academic Success](#) website.

Counseling and Psychological Services for Students: [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (619-594-5220) offers confidential counseling services by licensed therapists; you can also call the San Diego Access and Crisis 24-hour Hotline at (888) 724-7240.

Sexual Violence / Title IX Mandated Reporting: As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I am a mandated reporter in my role as an SDSU employee and am required to share information regarding sexual violence on SDSU's campus with the Title IX coordinator, Gail Mendez, at 619-594-6464. She (or her designee) will contact you to let you know about accommodations and support services at SDSU and possibilities for holding accountable the person who harmed you. Know that you will not be forced to share information you do not wish to disclose, and your level of involvement will be your choice. If you do not want the Title IX Officer notified, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, you can speak confidentially with the following campus offices: Sexual Violence Victim Advocate (619-594-0210); [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (619-594-5220, psycserv@sdsu.edu). For more information regarding your university rights and options as a survivor of sexual misconduct or sexual violence, please visit titleix.sdsu.edu or sdsutalks.sdsu.edu. A full list of resources is available [here](#).

Student Privacy and Intellectual Property: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) mandates the protection of student information, including contact information, grades, and graded assignments. I will use email or Canvas to communicate with you, and I will not post grades or leave graded assignments in public places. Students will be notified at the time of an assignment if copies of student work will be retained beyond the end of the semester or used as examples for future students or the wider public. Students maintain intellectual property rights to work products they create as part of this course unless they are formally notified otherwise.