This course will introduce you to Post-World War II Japanese cinema through multiple different lenses of critical conversation about film, culture, class, and history. Each lecture/discussion will focus on one feature film as a prominent example of aesthetic, cultural, or historic significance within the Post-WWII Japanese cinematic/media landscape; we will often pursue associated discussions and clips of related material. A concentrated emphasis on numerous different filmmakers, topics, and/or technical/aesthetic approaches will hopefully aid you in understanding some of the many facets of post-1950s Japanese culture, and show you how this in fascinating (and often controversial) national cinema conveys complex meanings about not only its own nation, culture and history, but also its attitudes toward the rest of the world.

Your final semester grade will be calculated as follows:

20% Screening/Discussion Responses (Submitted at various points during the semester)
25% One Critical Research Essay (Approx. 8-10 pages, stipulations forthcoming)
15% Class Participation (You are my checks & balances, so speak up!)
15% Attendance (Be here, because I like you!)
25% Final Exam (Cumulative essay exam reflection on semester’s material)
ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Missing two or more of our class meetings (the equivalent of four regular class meetings) without a medically or otherwise verified excuse will cause you to lose at least one full letter grade for the course!

OTHER EMF PRODUCTION COMMITMENTS ARE NOT VALID EXCUSES.

If you believe other EMF priorities will keep you from attending/engaging/participating in this class in significant ways, please consider enrolling in another class.

Departing early from class evenings/screenings will also affect your overall grade.

Critical readings/articles will be assigned weekly and made available through Blackboard. These readings will investigate issues of cultural and academic significance relating to Japanese cinema, including (but not limited to) local and transnational interpretation, social and political controversy, the aesthetic use of violence and/or sexuality, and generational divides between cultural and spiritual traditions. Additional supplementals may be added along the way, including relevant cultural articles and video pieces shown in class or linked through email.

A note on the distribution of Japanese films on U.S. DVD/Blu-ray and digital/online video:

I encourage you to seek out any films/directors you may become interested in for class-related or research or personal use. Unfortunately, home video/digital release of Japanese cinema is not a priority for most U.S. distributors. If you want to view or write about a particular Japanese film and are having trouble locating it, or have any questions as to the legality and/or presentation of the film/product you’re interested in, please feel free to contact me, and I will do my best to help and/or find a solution. I may even have a physical or digital copy you can borrow! Obviously, you should check Netflix, Hulu, Amazon and other On-Demand distributors first for physical or digital rentals or downloads, as they are increasingly expanding their catalogs of material. Piracy is of course a serious issue, but more importantly I would like you to be viewing films in their best possible presentation(s).

You will not need to master the Japanese language – or chopsticks – or even like sushi – for this course…but it is all encouraged!

(Although being respectful of cultural differences is of course required!)
CLASS SCHEDULE – WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, 6:30-9:30pm

AUG. 29th
1 – “What is the ominous shadow creeping up behind the history of motion pictures?”
An Introduction to Japanese Cinema through Japanese Cinema…
Talking Head (Mamoru Oshii, 1992)
Reading:
Richard Suchenski, Mamoru Oshii Bio from Senses of Cinema (Blackboard)
[Recommended] Daniel Pipes, “Japan Invents the Future”

SEPT. 5th   Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli
2 – Nausicaa Valley of the Wind (Hayao Miyazaki, 1984)
Reading:
Andrew Osmond, “Nausicaa and the Fantasy of Hayao Miyazaki”

SEPT. 12th   “It is wonderful to create.”
3  Rashomon (Akira Kurosawa, 1950)
Readings:
James F. Davidson, “Memory of Defeat in Japan: A Reappraisal of Rashomon”
Donald Richie, “A Personal Record”
Tadao Sato, “Kurosawa: Tradition in a Time of Transition”
Robert Van Es, “Persistent Ambiguity and Moral Responsibility in Rashomon”
Further suggested Kurosawa films:
SEPT. 19th  Nuclear Dreams and Mutant Monsters

4 – The Lucky Dragon Incident and Godzilla (1954)

Readings:


[Recommended] Susan J. Napier, “The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from Godzilla to Akira”

SEPT. 26th  “Without mercy, man is like a beast.”

5 – Historical Human Tragedy in Post-War Japanese Cinema

Sansho Dayu [a.k.a. Sansho the Bailiff] (Kenji Mizoguchi, 1954)

Readings:

Mark Le Fanu, “Mizoguchi – The Great Triptych” (on “Sansho the Bailiff, p. 304-end)

Richard Torrance, Mizoguchi Wexner Intro 2007

D.A. Miller on Sansho the Bailiff

OCT. 3rd

6 – Post-War Yakuza Warfare

Battles Without Honor and Humanity (Kinji Fukasaku, 1973)

Reading:

Richard Torrance, “The Nature of Violence in Fukasaku Kinji’s War without a Code of Honor”
OCT. 10th
7 – Nagisa Oshima’s Reflections of War

_Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence_ (Nagisa Oshima, 1983)

Reading:


Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, “Oshima Revisited”

Karen Jaehne on *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*

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OCT. 17th  
*The Gentle Art of Japanese Extortion*”

8 – Juzo Itami’s National Satire: _Minbo_ (Juzo Itami, 1992)

Readings:

Juzo Itami compiled journalism/obituaries (Word doc)


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OCT. 24th  
*Humor is like violence. They both come to you unexpectedly, and the more unpredictable they both are, the better it gets.*”

9 – Existential Gangster Philosophy: _Hana-Bi_ [a.k.a. _Fireworks_] (Takeshi Kitano, 1997)

Readings:

Rahul Hamid, Takeshi Cineaste Interview, 2000

Darell William Davis, “Reigniting Japanese Tradition with _Hana-bi_”

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OCT. 31st  “When we escape, it will be together!”

10 – Violence and Tragedy in Battle Royale (Kinji Fukasaku, 2000) [w/Takeshi Kitano!]

Reading:
[Recommended] Charles Nuckolls, “The Cartoon Nationalism of Contemporary Japan”

NOV. 7th  “Hacking your own Ghost”

11 – Cyborg Dreams and Psychosis in Ghost in the Shell (Mamoru Oshii, 1995)

Reading:

(concentrate on the Oshii/Ghost material for this week, opening - p. 53)

NOV. 14th  “You won’t know what’s interesting unless you try it…”


Reading:
Poole and Kato, “Cool Erotica” article
Bassyouni, “Sex in Japan: The Comebacks and Drawbacks”

**NO CLASS WED. NOV. 21st (Thanksgiving Break)**
Nov. 28th  *ESSAY DUE* (Details to be distributed)

13  The Rebel Grrrls of Sion Sono

*Tag* (Sion Sono, 2015)

Reading:


Mitch North, “The History of Sion Sono”

DEC. 5th – LAST CLASS MEETING

14  The Legacy of Satoshi Kon and...Japanese Cinema?

*Millennium Actress* (Satoshi Kon, 2001)

Reading:

Panos Kotzathanasis, “The Surrealistic Cinema of Satoshi Kon”

And see Satoshi Kon material in Week 11’s article:


**FINAL EXAM: WED. DEC. 12th, 7:30-9:30pm**
**Class Rules and Conduct:**

If the lecture period is interrupted by noise or activity due to any device, the offending student will be given a one-time warning; if the same student causes a subsequent interruptions, he/she will likely be dismissed from the class and re-admitted only under my discretion.

It should go without saying that NO electronic devices are allowed during Exam periods.

**Computers are discouraged, but allowed for students with accommodations.** For others, if you wish to use, please seat yourself near the back of the class room so as not to distract others.

Students cannot repeat a TU course more than once without the permission of the Academic Standards Committee.

**If you have been diagnosed with a learning disability or you play for a Towson team,** you are required to inform me at the beginning of the course, please hand-deliver me Accommodation forms as needed.

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**EMF Policy about Multitasking in the Classroom**

The EMF Department recognizes the utility of laptop computers and other electronic devices in the classroom, but only for academic purposes related to the course and under the direction of a faculty member to enhance learning. Student use of electronic devices for personal or other, non-course related activities, such as texting, e-mailing, Internet surfing, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, gaming, etc., is disruptive to fellow students, disrespectful to the professor, and detrimental to the student’s own academic performance.

Recent research findings indicate students who multitask perform significantly worse than do those who don’t multitask – with multitasking students performing at the same level as those who never come to class.

See some recent research linked here:


For these reasons, the Department of Electronic Media & Film fully supports faculty if they implement a course policy prohibiting or limiting the use of personal electronic devices in the classroom. The Department of Electronic Media & Film also fully supports any penalties, stated in the syllabus, assessed against students who violate the course policy.
My student device/technology policy is:

Laptops are permitted if you have special accommodations, but discouraged otherwise. Please make every attempt to engage in class discussion (and screenings!) and put away your phones for the duration. If you are distracting yourself or anyone else too much, I will take notice and your Attendance/Participation grade will be affected (possibly without even notifying you).

Format for papers:

All papers are to be typewritten and double-spaced, with one-inch margins and stapled together horizontally in the upper left-hand corner. A size 12 font in Times New Roman script is the required format.

I generally prefer MLA format for academic writing, and a nice set of guidelines are posted here: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

While I do not expect strict adherence to MLA standards within your essays, your title page(s) should reflect a general knowledge of MLA guidelines and approaches.

Essay Submittal Policies:

All assignments are to be turned in by the end of the lecture period on the due date.

Assignments will not be accepted by email unless specifically arranged with the instructor.

All late assignments will be lowered by 5% per weekday. This penalty may be waived in cases of illness or emergency documented to my satisfaction. Computer/technology problems are usually NOT valid excuses for late work.

All papers must be handed over directly to me – under no circumstances are assignments to be handed over to departmental assistants. To submit a late paper outside of class, you must contact me via email to arrange a “handoff.”
Writing Resources:

You are expected to work on improving your writing about film during the course. Unidentified excerpts of students’ work may be used for in-class exercises or to make points regarding common writing mistakes. You may meet individually with me to discuss your writing. Those desiring assistance outside of class may also benefit from using one of the following resources:

- **The Writing Support Program** helps native English speakers with sentence-level and grammar skills. Phone 410-704-3426 or to schedule an appointment. Liberal Arts 5330. [http://www.towson.edu/cla/centers/writing/](http://www.towson.edu/cla/centers/writing/)
- **English Language Center** (for non-native English speakers): [http://www.towson.edu/academics/international/englishlanguagecenter/](http://www.towson.edu/academics/international/englishlanguagecenter/)
- **Academic Achievement Center**: [http://www.towson.edu/aac/](http://www.towson.edu/aac/)

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

While at Towson University, you are expected to pursue an academic career with honorable integrity and honesty. You should review the University policy linked on-line at:

[https://www.towson.edu/about/administration/policies/documents/polices/03-01-00-student-academic-integrity-policy.pdf](https://www.towson.edu/about/administration/policies/documents/polices/03-01-00-student-academic-integrity-policy.pdf)

You are expected to understand this document.

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated.

Anyone feeling that they still do not understand the policy or have specific questions should arrange to meet with me.

Anyone caught plagiarizing will automatically receive a grade of **F** on the assignment in question, and may be given a failing grade for the course.

Plagiarism is defined in Diana Hacker’s *A Pocket Style Manual* as follows: “(1) Failing to cite quotations or borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words.” Any suspicious phrases or passages of text will be checked through Google, “turnitin.com,” Amazon.com’s “Search Inside the Book” and other tools at our discretion.
Weapons Policy:

To promote a safe and secure campus, Towson University prohibits the possession or control of any weapon while on University property. The term weapon includes any potentially dangerous object or substance or replica thereof. The full policy can be found at this link: https://www.towson.edu/about/administration/policies/documents/policies/06-01-11-weapons-prohibited.pdf

Emergency Text Alerts:

All students must sign up for the Campus Emergency Alert Text Message Notification System. Go to following link for instructions to do so: http://www.towson.edu/publicsafety/notification/index.html

COFAC Civility Code

All College of Fine Arts & Communication Studies students, staff, and faculty are committed to collegial and academic citizenship demonstrating high standards of humane, ethical, professional, and civil behavior in all interactions.

We must take responsibility for the relationship between our personal conduct and the quality of campus life. What we do and say always has an effect on others, whether we see it or not. Civility means more than respecting campus facilities and grounds. Civility means consistently treating people with consideration and respect. It means being courteous, polite, and fair. It means recognizing diversity and honoring differing points of view. When our behavior is guided by concern for others in our community, we are being civil. Practicing civility requires thoughtful behavior and checking our assumptions and perceptions of others’ race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, abilities, culture, belief systems and economic status.

Civility Code

COFAC places a priority on learning. We value the inherent worth and dignity of every person, thereby fostering a community of mutual respect. Students have the right to a learning environment free of disruptive behaviors and offensive comments. Faculty have the right to define appropriate behavioral expectations in the classroom and expect students to abide by
them. Faculty have the responsibility to manage and address classroom disruption. Staff have the right and responsibility to define appropriate behaviors necessary to conduct any university activity free of disruption or obstruction.

We believe that in order to achieve these ideals, all COFAC students, staff, and faculty are expected to exhibit and practice civil behaviors that exemplify: (1) respecting faculty, staff, fellow students, guests, and all university property, policies, rules and regulations; (2) taking responsibility for one’s choices, actions and comments; (3) delivering correspondence – whether verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic – with respectful language using professional writing standards and etiquette; and (4) accepting consequences of one’s choices and actions.

The use of offensive, threatening or abusive language, writing, or behavior will not be tolerated and can lead to academic dismissal. Further information about civility can be found in Appendix F of the university catalog.

Examples demonstrating civility in the classroom as a student include:

- Being respectful of the professor and other students.
- Not texting or using cellular phones and other electronic devices.
- Not eating or drinking in class.
- Not reading newspapers or listening to music during the class.
- Not sleeping in class.

Examples demonstrating civility in the classroom as a faculty member include:

- Being respectful of the students.
- Attempting to understand individual student needs and learning styles.
- Discussing civil behavioral expectations during the first class.
- Taking time to talk with students whose behaviors negatively affect the classroom.
- Encouraging students to follow your civil behavior.

EMF Google Group List Serve –

All EMF students are required to join the EMF Google Group List Serve at [http://groups.google.com/group/TowsonEMF](http://groups.google.com/group/TowsonEMF). This will guarantee that you receive daily postings regarding digital media, video, film, and audio production topics including festivals, special screening, guest speakers, film/video crew needs, internships, and jobs. Use this email address (TowsonEMF@googlegroups.com) to post your own messages to the group. The main page will also archive all posts.

Instructions:
1. Create a user account and password, and be sure to use the email to which you prefer receiving mail. (You only need to sign up once and you’ll continue to receive EMF Google group emails.)

2. Please select one of the three Email options for reading the group messages:

   (a) Abridged Email (No more than 1 email per day) -- Summary of new activity each day

   (b) Digest Email (Approximately 1 email per day) -- Up to 25 full new messages bundled into a single email

   (c) Email (Approximately 1 email per day) -- Best way not to miss important postings, as you get every message sent as it arrives