SP.270 Japanese Animation:
Still Pictures, Moving Minds

SP.270 日本のアニメーション：
静止画、色めき立つ心眼

Spring 2003
MW 3:30-5:00pm 4-364
M EVE 7-10:00pm 4-237
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SP.270 explores Japanese animation, known as anime, and its associated institutions in terms of media theories, aesthetics, fan cultures, and production practices. Students analyze significant series; debate over global and local reception, including fan culture growth and function; compare the anime form to other artistic works; connect anime with contemporary and historical trends in Japan; complete a project in a particular technical or artistic discipline related to anime. They examine works by specific directors (Oshii Mamoru, Ishiguro Noboru, Miyazaki Hayao) and studios, supplemented with readings, screenings, and guest speakers from the US and Japan. The course is taught in English.

This course is designed to be fun and interactive, while it builds a rigorous understanding of the anime medium through its history, its artists, and its institutions. This subject is relevant to all realms of academic inquiry, and should attract students who share interests in media studies, in communications, in commercial and industrial structures, in art and visual form, in gender treatment, and in Japanese culture, fan culture, and cross-cultural studies.

Be forewarned: our treatment of Japanese animation requires a high level of commitment and participation from students, who are expected to be consistently diligent, prompt, and attentive throughout this course. Expect to devote as much time to this course as you would any other at MIT. In return, you will receive one of the most comprehensive understandings of the development, function, and future of Japanese animation currently available. Please be aware of this before signing up.

❧ Enrollment

Enrollment is initially limited to 25 students, but more may be accommodated if students demonstrate a desire to complete all of the requirements. A diverse mix of students and backgrounds is optimal, so your degree of experience will not affect your chances of enrollment.

Objectives

This course is designed to explore each student's academic interest in anime, guided and structured by the core information supplied in lectures, screenings, and discussions. By the end of the course, students will:

- Have a basic understanding of Japanese language and culture as it relates to anime
- Articulate what anime is, and what common styles of anime exist
- Define the differences between Japanese and American/European animation
- Recognize unique and borrowed techniques that are used in anime
- Develop or adopt specialized vocabulary for anime analysis
- Appreciate anime as a medium and as a cultural product
- Understand the differences between values in fan and academic arenas
- Acquire fundamental Japanese language terms related to animation
- Understand the growth and function of the anime fan culture
- Recognize anime's functions in subculture, mass culture, and high culture
- Identify and appreciate the components of an anime production
- Identify texts that are significant to the development and definition of anime
- Determine what makes an anime text "artistic" or "significant"
- Recognize themes and motifs of these significant texts in later works
- Trace styles to specific people and to specific cultural forces

Satisfying some of these objectives may require use of special technologies. All students have access to these technologies through their Athena accounts and free resources at MIT. In addition, some students may wish to use the media creation tools around the Institute. For further information on technology use, consult the *Athena User's Guide* and Academic Computing's New Media Centers in 26-139 and 9-250.

Expectations and Grading

Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussion (20%), complete weekly assignments (10%), internalize vocabulary and complete weekly diagnostics (10%), present a series analysis (10%), complete a significant project (20%), write a final paper (15%), and take a cumulative diagnostic (15%). **Students must complete all assignments** (with a few exceptions, below) **to receive a passing grade for the course.** The details of each component are given below.

❧ In-Class Participation

Students must attend the lectures, discussion groups, and screenings. The instructor may only excuse students in case of a medical or family emergency. Partial time conflicts may be accepted on a case-by-case basis, but are discouraged. If students must miss a screening, it is expected that they watch independently. Films will be made available either in the Film Office, or at the request of the instructor.

❧ Weekly Assignments

There shall be an assignment every week to keep up on the material. These assignments are meant to encourage discussion and stimulate interest in anime inside and outside the classroom. Assignments will be distributed in class by Wednesdays, and will be due on the following Mondays. The first assignment will make use of the MIT Online Discussion Forums, located at forums.mit.edu.

Full-credit weekly assignments are each worth four points. The lowest two weekly assignments, including missed ones, will be dropped from the final grade. All but two missed assignments must be completed to pass the course; significantly late, missed assignments can be made-up for one point.

❧ Homework: Readings and Viewings

There is a lot of supplementary material for this class: please pick it up as soon as you can, and plan your time accordingly to read and view all of the material. In addition to Susan Napier and Gilles Poitras's works, students will watch *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (1982, 36 episodes). DVDs are available for course use from the MIT Film Office. We have about four copies of each of the nine DVDs. As a result, students will need to form small viewing groups and watch at a mutually-agreed time. Students will complete the series by the fourth weekly diagnostic.

The DVDs of *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross* are provided courtesy of AnimEigo, Inc.

❧ Vocabulary and Weekly Diagnostics

Japanese animation, like any other field, has a specialized vocabulary to describe particular features that are characteristic of the medium. Students will memorize these terms and complete weekly diagnostics on Wednesdays. Diagnostics will be given promptly at 3:35pm; please do not be late. The terms are either common in Japanese spoken language, as used in anime, are significant in anime analysis, or are names of artists and places. By the end of the class, we will cover over 150 terms. Each vocabulary component of the diagnostic will be worth two points.

When out-of-class viewings are scheduled (i.e., for *Macross*), the diagnostic will include a viewing check-up worth one point, which will enable students to demonstrate knowledge of what they have watched. If a student believes that he or she failed to receive a point for his or her response, but watched the viewing before the diagnostic, he or she may speak with the staff outside of class. Upon demonstration that he or she has watched the material, the staff will retroactively award the student the point.

Because this is not a Japanese class, there is no expectation that students will be able to read or write native Japanese script. We will administer weekly diagnostics with plenty of context for non-Japanese speakers; students may respond in roman script, or in an appropriate Japanese script. However, anime is art from Japan, so learning the fundamentals of Japanese will help considerably. Consider taking MIT's Japanese course offerings (21F.50x), and keeping kana (Japanese script) tables and reference works at hand.

For additional practice, we will be using Jim Breen's WWWJDIC. Optional use of this reference tool will be covered in lecture.

The lowest two weekly diagnostics, including missed diagnostics, will be dropped from the final grade. All but two missed diagnostics must be completed to pass the course; missed diagnostics can be made-up for one point.

☙ Series Analysis Presentation

TV and OVA series are the most common formats for anime. Since we will not be able to show all series, students in groups of one or two shall choose and present an analysis of one anime series that was not thoroughly explored in class. The series shall represent approximately one season (about 26 episodes), or a season plus supporting materials (such as a movie). If a series spans many seasons (such as *Yawara!*), students may either select one or two particular seasons. Alternatively, they may select a pair of seasons in order to compare and contrast plot and character developments. The series must have been released in Japan on or before 1997. For suggestions, contact the staff. A reference sheet with suggestions will be handed out on the second week.

Students should finish watching the series by March 12th. The due date for series analyses is Monday, March 17th, when we will spend the week presenting analyses. You are welcome to come during office hours for trial runs of your presentations.

The presentation will last for fifteen minutes. Up to three minutes may be given to plot summary; at least seven minutes shall be analysis. The remaining time shall be devoted to questions. The purpose of the presentation is to gain practical understanding and experience with the many features of anime studied in class. Grading is on the presentation and any supporting materials that the group brings to class.

While not required, students are encouraged to create and distribute series abstracts or character sheets to the class. Most non-Japanese viewers have difficulty remembering Japanese names and places; take this as an opportunity to improve your recognition of these. The sheets will also improve your own recollection when speaking in front of a large audience.

Students are encouraged to compare notes and ideas between groups, but the final presentations must be wholly their own.

☙ Project

The project integrates what the student is learning about anime into a single, concrete media work. Projects may be done in groups of two or three. Unlike the written research paper (below), the project is meant to be a significant contribution to the anime community as a whole. Since a complete project may be time-consuming, it is acceptable to merge this project with a project for another class, provided that anime is the overarching theme. Each group shall submit a one-page project plan for approval of the instructor by March 19th, to determine the project's feasibility. In this report, students must demonstrate that their final projects can meet prescribed goals in the allotted time provided. Grading will be based on academic relevance to the course and the criteria set forth in the project plan.

Examples for these final projects include:
- A drama music video integrating *El Hazard* and *Sol Bianca* with written commentary

- An academic website oriented around film comparisons of *Escaflowne: A Girl in Gaea* and *Ah! My Goddess the Movie*

- Revisions to a popular fansubbing computer program on the Internet

- A computer program that faithfully recreates an environment in *Tenchi Muyo!*

- An illustrated, shot-by-shot comparison of a significant character from the series analysis, or

- A screenplay for an original anime with a pitch to a Japanese anime company.

While students may interact with, and use, elements of fan culture in their final projects, it must be emphasized that the project is an academic work.

Groups must submit a one-page outline by March 19th; the staff will respond with feedback by the beginning of Spring Break. The final project is due on April 14th; presentations of projects will commence on this week. Project presentations will last for 15 minutes. Students may continue investing time into their projects after the due date. However, project grading will consider work done through the presentation, with regrades (up to 2/3 of a letter grade) available for work done afterwards. This early due date is meant to relieve stress from the final weeks of the course, when projects will be due for other classes.

✍ Written Research/Analysis Paper

Each student shall write a paper of at least six pages, analyzing a particular anime that was referenced in class. Valid works must constitute a complete story arc: that is, they must be one or more TV episodes, one season of TV episodes, one film, or one OVA sequence. The story arc chosen must differ from the work chosen as the series analysis, although the paper may build on the ideas explored in the series analyzed. The paper may also compare and contrast multiple anime or anime with other media works; however, in-depth treatment of only one anime is expected. Unlike the series analysis, the paper considers one or two substantial features of anime and defends them in-depth. The paper is due on May 7th, with a topic due on April 23rd and a rough draft due on April 30th.

Sample topics to explore include: audience attraction to *Tenchi Muyo!*, the defining features of protagonists in works by the CLAMP group, gender justice in the first season of *Ranma ½*, selfish love in *Video Girl Ai*, or the cinematography of loneliness in *Cowboy Bebop*: "Sympathy for the Devil."

The intent of the paper is to develop a highly-reasoned, cogent argument with respect to an anime work. With that in mind, proper spelling and grammar are important features of your arguments. Please allow your thoughts to shine through by elucidating them with appropriate English prose. You are welcome to use Japanese terms where appropriate, but Japanese is not the best recourse for notions that are already in English. Consult the Writing and Communication Center if you need help with the mechanics of writing.

✍ Cumulative Diagnostic

At the end of class, students shall engage in a "celebration of learning" on the evening on May 5th, when they shall demonstrate all that they have learned in the class on a written, cumulative diagnostic. The cumulative diagnostic will cover all material up through the previous week's material. It will include

vocabulary, audio-visual identification, image description, and brief essays. We will post the essay questions for the cumulative diagnostic in advance, to allow students to formulate their responses.

Students may bring their previous work, and corresponding instructor's remarks, to the comprehensive diagnostic. (Do not annotate your work with postscript, please.) It is to your advantage to complete as much of your paper as possible for the previous Friday's rough draft. There will be no weekly diagnostic on the week of May 5th.

Resources

✣ MIT Online Discussion Forums

SP.270 will use the MIT Online Discussion Forums at <http://forums.mit.edu/>. These forums will be used for the first weekly assignment.

To login for the first time, go to the entrance page and login with your MIT Web Certificate. After registering, e-mail the instructor with your e-mail address and your name as it appears in the MIT Directory (or using finger user@mit.edu). The instructor will add you to the SP.270 list, and will allow you to post and respond to messages in the SP.270 folder.

You can access the forum by navigating to Academic Conference > Other Programs > SP > SP.270. You can also reach the forum directly at <http://forums.mit.edu/acad?13@@.ee6d739>.

Please familiarize yourself with the forum's usage before posting. Help is available at <http://web.mit.edu/webcrossing/www/acadhelp.html>. Students also have rights enumerated under Student Information Policy <http://web.mit.edu/policies/sip/#7>. By default, only course participants have access to the forums.

✣ MIT Film Office

Copies of *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross* are available in the MIT Film Office, 14N-428. Familiarize yourself with its location, and begin watching *Macross* as soon as you can.

✣ MIT Anime Club Library

If you need reference anime for your research projects, you may borrow from the MIT Anime Club Library with a Club Membership. Library checkouts are conducted at Friday showings, as well as during the library's office hours. Visit any of the showings to register, or register online at <http://web.mit.edu/anime/register/>. More information is available at the website <http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/>.

✣ The Writing and Communication Center

Everyone can improve his or her writing. The Writing and Communication Center offers free advice to make your expository writing better. For helpful tips and tactics, visit 14N-317 or <http://web.mit.edu/writing/>.

❧ Jim Breen's WWWJDIC

Jim Breen, Associate Professor at Monash University, Australia, has created an excellent Japanese-English dictionary server called WWWJDIC. A member of the JDIC/xjdic/MacJDic family of dictionary software, WWWJDIC enables direct web access to various Japanese-English dictionary files. Users can search for Japanese and English words, lookup kanji information, and translate Japanese text into English definitions. This web dictionary may be useful in your studies during this course.

The main web address for WWWJDIC is <http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/wwwjdic.html>. A number of worldwide mirrors are available. Additional WWWJDIC tools, including integration with Microsoft Internet Explorer, are posted on the SP.270 website.

Required and Recommended Readings

Because anime is a very recent phenomenon, there is little academic material on the subject in English. The following is a compilation of English readings that are instrumental to the study of anime.

❧ Required

Poitras, Gilles. *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese in Japanese Animation?* Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1998.
Napier, Susan. *Anime: From Akira to Princess Mononoke*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Press, 2001.

❧ Recommended and Available at the Coop

Clements, Jonathan and Helen McCarthy. *The Anime Encyclopedia*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.
Poitras, Gilles. *Anime Essentials: Every Thing a Fan Needs to Know*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.

❧ Other Recommended Titles

Allison, Anne. *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Comics, and Censorship in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 2 Number 1. Anime Expo '93.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 2 Number 2. Anime Expo '94.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 3 Number 1. Anime Expo '95.
Anime Reference Guide, Volume 4 Number 1. Anime Expo '97.
Ledoux, Trish. *Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of Animerica, Anime & Manga Monthly (1992-97)*. San Francisco: Viz Communications, 1997.
Ledoux, Trish. *The Complete Anime Guide: Japanese Animation Film Directory & Resource Guide*. Issaquah, Washington: Tiger Mountain Press, 1997.
Martinez, D. P., et. al. *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univerity Press. 1998.
Schodt, Frederik. *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996.
Schodt, Frederik. *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics*. Kodansha International, 1983.

❧ Recommended Websites

Anime-Seiyuu Info Page. <http://www.fanfic.net/~hideaway/seiyuu.htm>.

Anime Web Turnpike. <http://www.anipike.com/>.

AnimEigo. <http://www.animeigo.com/>.

Books on Anime, Manga, and their place in Japanese culture. <http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/books.html>.

Hitoshi Doi. <http://www.tcp.com/doi/>.

Jim Breen's WWWJDIC. <http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/wwwjdic.html>.

MIT Anime Club. <http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/>.

MIT Anime Resources. <http://web.mit.edu/anime/www/resources.html>.

Parent's Guide to Anime, A. <http://www.abcb.com/parents/>.