

## Introduction to Cultural Studies

<b>Undergraduate / Graduate</b>	Undergraduate	<b>Registration Code</b>	0055421
<b>Course Category</b>	Arts Liberal	<b>Credits</b>	2.0
<b>Term (Semester) / Day / Period</b>	G-II (1st year, Spring Semester) / Fri. / 4 (14:45~16:15)		
<b>Instructor</b>	MC GEE Dylan Patrick		
<b>Contact e-mail of the Instructor</b>	mc.gee.dylan.patrick.x8@f.mail.nagoya-u.ac.jp		

### ●Goals of the Course

As a liberal arts course in the humanities, this course is designed to introduce students to theories and methods currently used in cultural studies, while fostering critical inquiry and understanding of other cultures.

### ●Objectives of the Course

Students in this class will develop basic academic skills like critical reading and analytic writing, while also enhancing communication skills through group discussion and presentation.

### ●Course Content or Plan

In this class, we will explore some of the ways in which digital technologies mediate our social lives and experiences within contemporary culture. Working primarily within the setting of Japan, we will start off with some historical context about pre-digital transmedia cultures of wartime and early postwar Japan, culminating in the Kadokawa “media mix” of the 1970s, followed by a look at participatory communities that formed around *dōjinshi* fanzines of the 1960s through the 1990s. Major shifts in the media ecology of Japan during the so-called “lost decade,” including the spread of the internet, digital tools for self-publishing, and the rapid development of gaming technologies, helped radically reshape the spaces of cultural consumption and fan labor, while also expanding the audiences for Japanese media on a global scale. Despite attempts to steer these developments towards national or political agendas—such as in the “Cool Japan” campaign of the 2010s—regular people like you and me still play a decisive role in determining how we consume or “prosume” culture. So, in a sense, this class is about us and about why our digitally-mediated experiences matter.

Week to week, we will meet to discuss a topic that relates to the overarching theme of the class. Readings will be selected to offer grounding for critical analysis, and in my own role as a teacher, I will be introducing theoretical concepts from media and cultural studies that (hopefully!) will give you new insights into your own digital practices. To that end, I will be keenly interested in hearing about your own experiences with Japanese media and culture, and what you think is significant about liking a video, sharing a meme, or going out of your dorm once in a while to play *Pokemon Go*.

Here is our tentative schedule of discussion meetings (topic subject to revision):

Week 1. Course Overview

Week 2. Why talk about wartime cartoons?

Week 3. Precursors to transmedia storytelling and the media mix

Week 4. *Dōjinshi* fanzines and participatory subcultures of the 1960s-1990s

Week 5. Soft power meets scanlation communities

Week 6. Toys as authoring tools, collectibles, and social media content

Week 7. *Kawaii*, *moe*, and affective play

Week 8. *Yurukyara* mascot characters and economies of affect

Week 9. Pikachu jumps from your Gameboy to your iPhone—and into your heart

Week 10. A virtual date with Date Masamune (1567-1636)—history fangirls and heritage tourism

Week 11. On the road with hardcore Visual-K fans

Week 12. Are toxic fans really fans?

Week 13. *Insutabae*, microcelebrity and the digitally mediated self

Week 14. *Animal Crossing* and other guilty pleasures during the pandemic

Week 15. Conclusions

### ●Course Prerequisites and Related Courses

There are no prerequisites to enroll in this course. All are welcome! Some previous background in East Asian humanities and/or proficiency in Japanese would be helpful.

### ●Course Evaluation Method and Criteria

*Assessment in this course will be according to a contract system.* At the start of the semester, each student will be given a choice of three different learning tracks—Discovery track (final grade of B), Mastery track (final grade of A), and Research track (final grade of A+/S). Each track has a different set of tasks and learning objectives that result in a fixed grade. The estimated time investment for each track is also different. This is so that students can make informed decisions, early in the semester, regarding their academic goals and level of commitment to this class. Upon successfully meeting all the objectives in their chosen track, students will earn the grade they signed up for. Specific details about the assessment schedule for each track can be viewed on the online version of the syllabus, which will be accessible starting on Friday, April 1st (see below for link).

### ●Study Load (Self-directed Learning Outside Course Hours)

In addition to the ninety (90) minutes of time spent in each class meeting, students should expect to spend time outside of class each week reading and writing responses to weekly prompts. Your work load will depend on which learning track you have chosen to join. In general, students on the Discovery track (final grade of B) can expect an average of one hour or less per week, students on the Mastery track (final grade of A) around two hours per week, and students on the Research track (A+/S) around three hours per week. For more details, refer to the guide to learning tracks, which is posted on our CANVAS site.

### ●How to Respond to Questions

Students are always encouraged to ask questions or make comments during class, before or after class, or through the discussion prompt box that will be open week to week on CANVAS. Students may also reach me through e-mail.

### ●Notice for Students

*Due to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made it difficult for many international students to enter the country, my current plan is to teach this course online.* If conditions improve to the degree that there appears to be little risk of students contracting COVID-19 by coming to class, I will reconsider; but since my first priority is your health and wellbeing, I want to play it safe. So please assume that we will NOT be meeting in person unless I notify you otherwise. *Also note that even in the event that we are able to hold in-class meetings, any student in the class will still be able to participate in this class entirely online if they are overseas or have concerns about attending in-person meetings.*

If you are considering enrolling, or if you are still on the fence and would simply like to learn more about the course content, please visit the following signup sheet page on Google Docs so that I can send you an invitation to the course site:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bR2MzFYjbnVXDslk5diy0P8MMZbIas39QNVt0ysRY-I/edit?usp=sharing>

**IMPORTANT:** I will NOT be using NUCT to teach this class. Our class will be taught on CANVAS and our weekly meetings will be held on ZOOM. After you fill out the signup sheet linked above, I will provide you with the password for accessing the CANVAS site and the URL for ZOOM. It is your responsibility to write me and request access to CANVAS before the semester starts.

Note that I will be opening the course site on Friday, April 1st. That way, you can view the online version of the syllabus, peruse the schedule of course readings, and even get a head start working on some of the lesson modules before the semester starts.

*Required statement about course withdrawal:* If you wish to withdraw from this class, please inform me in writing (by e-mail) as early in the semester as possible. If you write me before the ILAS deadlines for roster changes, your name will be removed from the roster. If you write me later than that, then your name will continue to appear on the roster, and you will be given a grade of absent (W or 欠).

<b>Textbook</b>	No required textbook for purchase. All course readings will be made available on the first day of class.
<b>Reference Book</b>	A list of optional readings and reference materials will be made available on our course site.