Instructor: Cody Poulton  
Office and Hours: CLE C213, Wednesdays, 1:30 AM-3:30 PM or by appointment  
Class Times: Wednesdays, 4:30-7:30 PM  
Class Location: CLE C316  

Course Description:  
Recent advances in science and technology (such as medicine, bio-engineering, artificial intelligence, robotics, discoveries in the life sciences of the intelligence of animals and their communicative abilities, etc.) are beginning to have a profound impact on our understanding of human life, its limits and place in the scheme of things. Our sense of humanity has always been contingent upon ideas regarding race, ethnicity and nation, social class, and gender; narratives of humanity—indeed the very discipline of “humanities”—have until recently been developed and disseminated out of a religious and philosophical tradition originating in the European renaissance of the classical Greek and Roman notion that “man [sic] is the measure of all things.” But other cultures, especially those in Asia, have equally venerable and rich traditions that place humankind into a larger and more complex matrix of sentient life that includes everything from plants and trees to invisible spiritual entities. Metamorphosis and transmigration, rather than any sense of a privileged place in “the great chain of Being,” determine human existence and individual identity in many Asian belief systems. Nor have any of these beliefs been eternal or universal, but are contingent at any given time on various
fluctuating factors such as history, politics, economics and culture. Advances in media, animation and simulation, including computer graphics and virtual reality, have also brought about a paradigm shift in our understanding of reality and the limits or potential of human agency. In *Phantasmagoria*, the English literary scholar Marina Warner notes that “a non-Christian, classical, mythical idea about individual potential and polyvalence has set aside a traditional concept of the soul.”

The present course has no particular agenda other than to explore some of the ways different cultures in Asia, chiefly through their arts (including film and other media), have expressed how it is to exist in the world as human beings. At the heart of many of the culture wars and “clashes of civilization” we face in our increasingly globalized world are opposing notions of humanity, its place, its rights and duties regarding others, even and especially now to the non-human world, and we have an obligation as curious human beings to enquire into the validity of these other ways lest our own humanity come up short. With a number of primary readings and theoretical texts, we will examine the limits of the human from a comparative cultural perspective. Classes and discussion will be arranged around a number of general topics, including; monsters, machines, animals, puppets, gods, ghosts and demons.

**Texts:**

Will be provided in the form of PDF documents, books on Reserve, or items digitally available as e-books or through platforms like Project Muse.

See the Bibliography on Coursespaces for other suggested readings.

**COURSEWORK:**

This course is designed both as an upper-level seminar for undergraduates and as a graduate seminar. Methods of evaluation are similar, but graduate students are required to submit a longer final research essay.

1. **Two Presentations on shorter readings:**
   - Each presentation should last 15-20 minutes in class. Students need to prepare a written 2-3 page, double-spaced summary of their in-class presentation within one week of their presentation.
     1st presentation (student selects a text from class readings): 10%
     2nd presentation (student selects a text from class readings): 15%

2. **Essay:**
   - **Essay proposal:** a one-page abstract of your thesis; brief discussion of the texts to which you will refer, your methodology and the significance of the project.
     Due September 27 5%
(b) **Outline and annotated bibliography**: a 2-3 page outline of your thesis, with a 2-3 page bibliography. This should show a marked development from the abstract in your ideas, a familiarity with the text or texts, both primary and secondary, you will address, and a conceptual understanding of the key issues and debates you have identified for your work and the literature available on the subject. **Due October 18. 10%**

(c) **Class presentation**: a 30 minute in-class presentation of your work. Please select one major text for distribution to the other students at least one week prior to your presentation so that all can read it. The text in question can be of any work of literature (poetry, short story, novel), graphic fiction (*manga*) or film (both live action or anime). Works should be no shorter than about 25 pages in length (if poetry, a collection of poems rather than a single poem, unless it is a long narrative poem) and no longer than 50 pages. Non-fiction can also be considered if the work is considered a seminal work that is representative of the social or cultural phenomenon you wish to address, and not, for example, a secondary work of criticism *about* someone else’s work. 

**November 22 and 29. See class schedule. 15%**

(d) **Final Essay**: minimum 10 pp. (495) and 15 pp. (521) double-spaced. **Due December 7. 30%**

4. **Class Attendance, Participation and Progress:**

   Since we meet only once a week, it is imperative that students attend all classes. Should illness or some other extenuating circumstance prevent you from attending, please let me know as soon as possible. Students need to do the readings *prior* to class. Attendance includes regular submission of responses to the Moodle discussions on weekly readings. **15%**

I'll assess your written work on the basis of the following (percentages are rough benchmarks for weighting of my evaluations):

**CONTENT (40%)**: Are all the points you raised relevant to your argument? Have you backed up your information with factually accurate and relevant data, with reference to primary sources and secondary criticism, and (if necessary) material covered in class lectures and readings? Have you covered all the relevant points? Are your ideas original and well thought out?

**STRUCTURE (20%)**: Do you state clearly and explicitly your topic and thesis in your introduction? Is there a coherent and logical progression of your ideas, which are reviewed and summarized in your conclusion?

**GRAMMAR AND STYLE (20%)**: Please note that the Calendar, p. 23, advises that "term essays and examination papers will be refused a passing grade if they are deficient in English." You are expected to demonstrate that you can express yourself clearly, correctly, and as precisely as possible in writing. Should you fail to do so, the least you can expect is a letter-grade reduction (i.e., 'A' to 'B'). On the other hand, writing with
originality and flair may boost your grade. English-writing clinics are available for those who feel they need them.

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION ( /10%): Have you used correct spelling and punctuation? Spelling should be Anglo-Canadian, not American style: for example, "theatre" not "theater;" "colour," not "color."

PHYSICAL PRESENTATION ( /10%): Is the work double-spaced, typed, or (if handwritten) legible? Does it have a title page with your name on it? Is it stapled together? Are citations identified by page references or footnotes? Is a complete bibliography provided?

Research Tools:

The library is the obvious place to go, not only for materials on Course Reserve, but for any materials for your research or general reading on this subject. Many resources, such as journal articles, encyclopedias and dictionaries and even some books and videos, are available online. The following link provides an excellent guide for research and reading materials in Japanese Studies: [http://libguides.uvic.ca/JapaneseStudies](http://libguides.uvic.ca/JapaneseStudies). Our Asian Librarian Ying Liu is a fount of information, and will be most happy to assist you if you have any questions.

Style Guide:

Please use Anglo-Canadian, not American spelling, of English words, and italics for words that are not in the English lexicon. Words like samurai and geisha can be found in an English dictionary, but less familiar words like yōkai (monsters) should be in italics. Put academic articles, essays and shorter works into quotation marks (e.g. “Asian Values and Global Human Rights”), but longer, book-length works into italics (e.g. The Complete Works of Chuang-Tzu). Either the MLA or Chicago Style of citation is permissible, but be consistent with the method you use. See the following: [http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/guides/](http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/guides/)

** Plagiarism and cheating: Plagiarism is unacceptable, and appropriate measures will be taken should it be detected. The least you can expect is a mark of zero on the assignment. See attached departmental policy, as well as the University Calendar Policy on Academic Integrity, for regulations regarding plagiarism and cheating.

Grades will be given for all work based on the following percentage scale:

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