Outline and purpose of the course

Japanese popular media practices play not only in Japan a major role in the everyday lives of many people. The course investigates various elements of this popular and consumer culture, such as manga, anime, or games, from a transcultural perspective. The focus of this practice-oriented and interactive seminar lies on theoretical concepts and analytical techniques useful to engage transculturality in the cross-disciplinary research fields of visual, material and media culture.

The course revisits key readings for a transcultural approach dealing with visual practices, such as cosplay, and media content, for example, cultural representations of nationality or gender. A second point of departure is formed by questions of production, reception and appropriation by users in and outside Japan. The theoretical input forms the basis for practical exercises in applying these methodologies to concrete cases.

Course goals

The course seeks to establish an understanding not only of theories of transculturality, entertainment and user agency but of various angles of research methodology useful for the study of visual and media practices. Students will exercise to apply key methodologies to contemporary cases studies, such as cyber-ethnography of fans, qualitative visual and textual analysis of manga, or the analysis of discourses surrounding the physical embodiment of fictional characters. The aim of the course is to assist students in taking the leap to a position of knowledge-production and thus focuses on practical exercises and training in academic presentation skills.

Course schedule and contents

A detailed plan for each class will be determined depending on the number of and the feedback from the participants, but will be guided by the following overall procedure:

(1) The students gain access to necessary tools via lectures and detailed discussions of methodological and theoretical examples taken from existing research [first five-week period].
(2) The class decides on a shared question for project investigations, a specific object and appropriate methods. As networks of humans and artifacts (media), popular culture often necessitates analyses of contents as well as “users.” Accordingly, and if the number of participants permits, the class is divided into different project groups (e.g. text analysis, ethnography, cyber-ethnography), working on the same question from different angles (triangulation) [second five-week period].
(3) Employing an e-learning environment (forums, journals), the groups plan and execute the projects under the instructor’s supervision. Finally, the groups present results, discuss problems and achievements in accordance with the overall study question [last five-week period].

The lectures, individual preparations (homework/feedback) and group projects will figure 1/3 of the course each.
Courses on Asian and Transcultural Spring-Fall 2017

Course Title
Japanese Contemporary Popular Culture: Media Practices in a Global Context

Instructor's affiliation, department, job title and name
Björn-Ole KAMM
Program Specific Senior Lecturer
Center for the Promotion of Interdisciplinary Education and Research

Academic semester that the course is offered
Fall 2017

Prerequisites
3rd year and above.

Evaluation
Homework (20%), project work, presentation and report (50%), feedback (10%), participation (20%).

Studies to be done outside of class
The participants are expected to attend every class and spend a certain amount of time outside of this class for this course. Regular homework as well as group exercise will play an important role in this course, so preparation, review and project work out of the class requires at least about an hour.

Textbooks
None.

Further readings
The course materials as well as lecture slides will be made available via the course webpage. The course takes some guiding ideas from “Inside-out Japan? Popular culture and globalization in the context of Japan,” by Matthew Allen & Rumi Sakamoto. 2006. Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan. London & New York: Routledge. pp. 1-12. Reading their introduction/book is not mandatory but the chapter may be obtained prior to the course by contacting the instructor.

https://www.cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/ (see KULASIS for details and the enrolment key)

Others
Consultation (office hours) by appointment. The course webpage will be available to download the course material.
Please contact the instructor Björn-Ole Kamm <kamm@cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp> for any questions regarding this course syllabus.

About the instructor

Björn-Ole KAMM
Ph.D. in Japanese Studies, Heidelberg University
M.A. in Japanese Studies and Communication & Media Studies, Leipzig University
Areas of Specialization: Practice theory, transculturality, uses and gratifications of Japanese popular media, role-playing theory and practice.