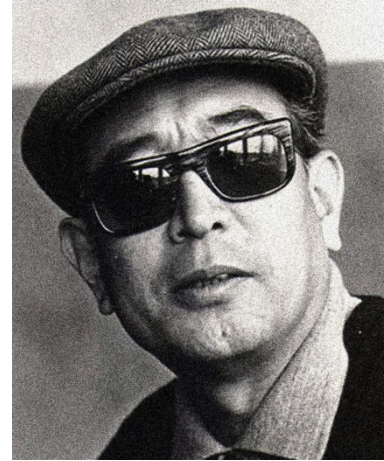


DC270: THE CINEMA OF AKIRA KUROSAWA

Section 101 - Fall 2018-2019

Lecture Location: STDCT 330
Day/Time: Mondays 1:00 – 4:15PM

Instructor: John Klein
E-mail: jklein38@cdm.depaul.edu
Office Location: STDCT 332
Office Hours: Mondays 10:00 – 11:30 AM



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Akira Kurosawa was a filmmaker without equal, bridging the post-WWII gap between East and West in a prolific career spanning over fifty years. Many of the great classic films and filmmakers of the West found roots in the master's work; Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* begat Clint Eastwood's 'The Man With No Name' trilogy, *Seven Samurai* was remade as *The Magnificent Seven*, and *The Hidden Fortress* served as George Lucas's main inspiration behind *Star Wars*. And from *Rashomon* to *Seven Samurai* to *Ran*, the auteur's power and inventiveness as a storyteller has withstood the test of time; Rian Johnson has even listed Kurosawa's later color work as among his visual inspirations for *The Last Jedi*.

This class will serve as an analysis of his work through the lenses of history and biography, and will break down how the structure and style of his films have influenced a new generation of filmmakers.

Please Note: *This class teaches concepts and history over hands-on technology; if you're looking for a production class, go elsewhere!*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- ❖ Learn about the **biographical information** on the life and films of Akira Kurosawa
- ❖ Understand the **historical context** around the films he made, as well as around the changes in Japanese culture
- ❖ Identify **techniques and themes** at work in Kurosawa's varied films, and how they changed over time
- ❖ Examine the **collaborative relationship** between Kurosawa as director and his numerous fellow artists, including his team of screenwriters, his longtime composer, his cinematographers, and especially actor Toshiro Mifune
- ❖ Gain an understanding of why Kurosawa's films have **defied or at times invented convention** and have been often remade or referenced in the West

REQUIRED TEXTS

- ❖ **The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa** by Stephen Prince
ISBN-10: 0691010463
ISBN-13: 978-0691010465
- ❖ **The Films of Akira Kurosawa** by Donald Richie
Third Edition, Expanded and Updated
ISBN-10: 0520220374
ISBN-13: 978-0520220379
- ❖ **DESIRE2LEARN (D2L):** Additional readings and links will be posted on D2L.

ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

- ❖ **ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION:** 15% You are required to attend class and participate in the day's activities and discussions. This active engagement will ensure you get the most from the course! For online students, attendance will be tracked via lecture and film views on D2L and via discussion posts.
- ❖ **WEEKLY JOURNALS:** 30% There will be one film assigned per week for you to screen at home via D2L/Panopto/Vimeo. Watch the film and then, using prompts I give you, write a journal entry on D2L's discussion boards answering the questions posed and discussing your feelings about the film itself.
- ❖ **SCENE STUDY:** 15% You will pick a scene from a given film and, in a 3pp paper, analyze the various techniques used (ex. Camera movement, editing, set design, use of weather, performances, writing, etc.) and how they tell the story in a uniquely Kurosawa manner.
- ❖ **THESIS OUTLINE:** 5% The precursor to your thesis paper, in which you'll pick your films, come up with a basic thesis, and outline the points and general evidence you'll cite. You'll be required to list your tentative sources as well!
- ❖ **THESIS PAPER:** 20% Picking from one of five topics, you'll write a 5-7pp paper analyzing and comparing various Kurosawa works. You must craft a solid thesis statement, support your thesis with evidence, and obey basic grammar and formatting conventions.
- ❖ **FINAL EXAM:** 15% The final exam will be a series of essay questions highlighting topics we've discussed throughout the quarter, which you will have access to ahead of time and which you can bring in a predetermined amount of notes to help you during the exam period.

*Extra credit may also be made available in the form of a) attending a **screening**, b) writing a **paper** on a more obscure Kurosawa work, and/or c) writing a **short script** that remakes a Kurosawa film in a more Western mold. Details on these will be announced during the quarter.*

A = 100-93, A- = 92.9-90, B+ = 89.9-87, B = 86.9-83, B- = 82.9-80, C+ = 79.9-77, C = 76.9-73, C- = 72.9-70, D+ = 69.9-67, D = 66.9-63, D- = 62.9-60, F = 59.9+Below.

"A" indicates Excellence, "B" indicates Very Good, "C" indicates Satisfactory, "D" indicates Poor, "F" indicates the student has NOT accomplished the objectives of the course.

GRADING POLICY

Like all other professions, filmmakers must adhere to strict deadlines. Students are expected to turn in all assignments by the established deadlines. LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. I will not accept the excuse of technological failure or absent-mindedness (you all have phones...set alarms and calendar reminders for due dates). *Back up your work and do not leave your work until the last second!* This is your warning. All grades will be kept current on D2L and written feedback will be given for each assignment.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to be on time, and if you plan on missing or being late to a class are expected to e-mail the instructor BEFORE that particular class. The instructor reserves the right to determine whether an absence or tardy is “excused.” ***Unexcused absences or tardiness will negatively affect your grade.*** Please see ***Course Policies as Suggested by the Dean of Students Office*** at the end of the syllabus to see how your grade will be affected. Attendance will be kept current on D2L. If you want to question a recorded absence or tardiness, it must be done within a week of the recorded occurrence.

COMPUTER/CELLPHONE/I-PAD ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

If you are using any personal or school electronic equipment during class for anything other than class-related work, *you will be asked to leave and will be counted as absent for that class.* I encourage you to take notes by hand rather than typing on your computer; trust me, you’ll learn better!

In addition, there will be a number of film and scene screenings during class time. I expect you to adhere to the same policy during these screenings; if I see a phone out (barring an emergency), I will ask you to leave the classroom.

E-MAIL POLICY

You are expected to read all e-mails from the class instructor, and you are responsible for knowing the information they contain. *So, you should check your e-mail at least once every 24 hours!*

Type **DC270** in the subject of all e-mails to the instructor about this class. Please DO NOT JUST REPLY to my all-class e-mails because your response might get lost in the shuffle—*Send me an individual e-mail! I will do my best to get back to you in short order, but please allow up to 24hrs for the instructor to respond.*

PROJECT FILE LABELING + FORMAT POLICY

Label all Files as such (ex. Student is STEVEN SPIELBERG and he is submitting the “RESEARCH PAPER”): **Spielberg_ResearchPaper.**

Submit all papers as DOC, DOCX or PDF files. All papers must be double-spaced, Times or Arial 12pt font, typical 1" margins. Word counts for each assignment will be given out on the assignment sheets.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

All work submitted for this class should be original work made specifically for this class. If you are found to be submitting work you have written for another class, you will receive zero credit for that particular assignment.

I will grade the first project file that is submitted. Check and double-check the work you are submitting. Do not submit the wrong file, an incomplete file, a corrupted file, etc. Submit the correct project file *by each deadline* – we're filmmakers, and we adhere to very strict deadlines in the real world. Most work will be submitted through D2L Dropbox unless otherwise specified. Do not leave this until the last second—upload several hours before the deadline to be safe! *Again, no late work is accepted! AND you should always double-check that your file has been successfully uploaded to D2L!*

FILM + VIDEO CONTENT WARNING:

A full spectrum of award-winning film and video content will be shown in class with the hope that it will enlighten and inspire you. There are times where the subject matter may be disturbing to some viewers. If you are highly sensitive to any particular cinematic content, please inform the instructor and you will be excused from watching said content.

EXCUSES (i.e. LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM)

(Lovingly stolen from Prof. Brian Zahm)

My courses are designed to teach professional conduct and particular skill-sets. Time management skills are essential for all endeavors. Modern technology makes it easy to stay organized, on time and on task. Please remember, an excuse is just that—an *excuse*. Here are just a few examples of excuses for not meeting class obligations that I won't accept:

- ❖ I have a life...
- ❖ I forgot...
- ❖ I didn't realize...
- ❖ I mixed up the dates...
- ❖ I don't "do" books...
- ❖ My alarm didn't go off...
- ❖ I live out of town so I can't...
- ❖ I was busy working on other projects so I didn't...
- ❖ My job called me in so I had to work and couldn't do my assignment...
- ❖ I would have made the deadline if the deadline wasn't when it was...
- ❖ It's just easier to do it my way, so I did it my way...
- ❖ Other classes don't have me do it this way, so I did it their way...
- ❖ I was not aware of class policy...
- ❖ I didn't read the e-mail you sent out, so I didn't know...

- ❖ My hard-drive crashed and I didn't back up my work...
- ❖ The internet was slow when I tried to turn in my project...
- ❖ I accidentally submitted the wrong project file, but it was on time...
- ❖ I have to pick my friend up at the airport so I can't...
- ❖ I have to go on vacation so I can't...
- ❖ I was at a bar and...
- ❖ I scheduled an appointment during class time so I can't...
- ❖ I don't want to do this for my career, so I don't need to know how to do this so I didn't...
- ❖ I haven't been meeting class expectations, but I'm on scholarship and need an "A" so...
- ❖ I thought I turned in my project, but I didn't...
- ❖ I didn't look on the syllabus...

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

9/10 **Lecture:** Syllabus, Introductions, Reading Films, East vs. West, Who is Kurosawa?
Clips: Various documentary clips, *Tokyo Story*, *Sansho the Bailiff*
Assigned Film: *Sanshiro Sugata*
Reading: Richie pp14-23, Prince Ch2 (pp32-66), Random Notes on Filmmaking
Assignment: Weekly Journal

Week 2

9/17 **Lecture:** WWII and Japanese Censorship, Kurosawa's Beginnings, Stylistic Hallmarks, The War's End
Clips: *Sanshiro Sugata 1 and 2*, *The Most Beautiful*, "Composing Movement"
Assigned Film: *Drunken Angel*
Reading: Richie pp47-53, Excerpt from Something Like An Autobiography
Assignment: Weekly Journal

Week 3

9/24 **Screening in class:** *Stray Dog* (122min)
Lecture: The Themes and Influence of *Stray Dog*, Postwar Kurosawa and the Occupation, Toshiro Mifune
Assigned Film: *Ikiru*
Reading: Richie pp58-64, 86-96, Prince Ch3 (pp67-113)
Assignment: Weekly Journal

Week 4

10/1 **Lecture:** Discussion of *Ikiru*, Kurosawa the Humanist, Commentaries on Postwar Japan, Working Style
Clips: *Record of a Living Being (I Live In Fear)*, *Scandal*, *The Quiet Duel*
Assigned Film: *High and Low*
Reading: Richie pp163-170, Prince Ch4 (pp114-154)
Assignment: Weekly Journal, Scene Study (due Week 6 before class on 10/15)

Week 5

10/8 **Screening in class:** *Rashomon* (88min)
Lecture: Themes, style, history, influence and significance of *Rashomon*
Clips: *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, *Star Trek: TNG* "A Matter of Perspective", *Courage Under Fire*

Assigned Film: *Throne of Blood*
Reading: Richie pp70-80, 115-124
Assignment: Weekly Journal

Week 6

10/15 **Lecture:** Noh Theater, Shakespeare, Kurosawa's Adaptations, Portrayals of Women
Clips: *The Bad Sleep Well*, *The Lower Depths*, *The Idiot*
Screening in Class: *Seven Samurai* (Part One)
Assigned Film: *Seven Samurai* (Part Two)
Reading: Richie pp97-108, Selected Essays on *Seven Samurai*
Assignment: Weekly Journal, Thesis Outline (due Week 8 before class on 10/29)
Due: Scene Study

Week 7

10/22 **Lecture:** Discussion of *Seven Samurai*, Remaking Kurosawa
Clips: *The Hidden Fortress* and *Star Wars*, *The Magnificent Seven*,
Yojimbo/Sanjuro and *A Fistful of Dollars*
Assigned Film: *Yojimbo*
Reading: Richie pp147-155, Prince Ch6 (pp201-235), articles on remakes
Assignment: Weekly Journal

Week 8

10/29 **Lecture:** Kurosawa and the Modern World, Transitioning to Color, Personal and
Production Struggles
Screening in Class: *Ran* (first half)
Clips: *Red Beard*, *Dodesukaden*, *Dersu Uzala*
Assigned Film: *Ran* (second half)
Reading: Richie pp204-213, Prince Ch7 (pp236-292)
Assignment: Weekly Journal, work on final paper
Due: Thesis Outline

Week 9

11/5 **Lecture:** Discussion of *Ran* in the context of Kurosawa's themes: Humanism vs.
Pessimism, the changing world
Clips: *Ran*, *Kagemusha*,
Assigned Film: *Dreams*
Reading: Richie pp227-245, Prince Ch8 (pp293-339)
Assignment: Weekly Journal, Thesis Paper

Week 10

11/12 **Lecture and Discussion:** The Legacy and Auterism of Kurosawa
Clips: *Dreams*, *Rhapsody in August*, *Madadayo*
Reading: Prince Ch9 (pp341-358)
Assignment: Weekly Journal, study for final
Due: Thesis Paper (by Friday 11/16), class evaluations

Week 11

11/19 **FINAL EXAM from 2:30-4:45pm**

OTHER SYLLABUS ITEMS:

Note On Requirements (and the Syllabus in General)

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, and posted on D2L. AS A MEMBER OF THIS CLASS, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO KNOW AND FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES SET FORTH ON THE TOTALITY OF THIS SYLLABUS. These guidelines are established to ensure all students know what is expected of them, and so all students are treated equally by being held to the same standards.

Attitude:

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

Civil Discourse:

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be [Socially Responsible Leaders](#). It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Cell Phones/On Call:

If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable inclass. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296