Japan's Transcultural Media
Crossing Borders in the Modern Era

1. Introduction to the idea of Japan's Transcultural Media

For many of the post-war generation, their first encounter with Japanese media was through *Godzilla* films and *Astro Boy* on television (1960s); samurai films (*jidai-geki*, 1970s); children’s television (1980s), and then the explosion of anime, manga, novels, and films that began in the 1990s. However, Japan was one of the first nation-states to make documentary films, movies and use newreels to keep their citizens informed, while also watching Hollywood and European cinema. Post-war, the television became ubiquitous in households. This lecture will try and make sense of how Japanese media consumption and production has long been transnational while also supporting state ideology.

Key Readings:


For Future Reading:

Japan as empire and film as essentially transnational: key example Ozu's 1930s gangster trilogy

Readings:


2. The post-war 'discovery' of a national style, key examples: Kurosawa's modern (gendai 現代劇) films versus the foreign admiration for his samurai (jidai geki 時代劇) films and how Ozu was raised to iconic Japanese status

In this lecture we consider how Japanese film came to be seen as art house film in the global film festival circuit. Beginning with the success of Kurosawa’s Rashomon at the Venice Film Festival in 1951, we consider how a certain image of Japan and expectations about Japanese cinema grew up in the 1950s-80s. From the Japanese side an interesting discourse occurred: success in the international arena for Kurosawa led to discussions of his being ‘not being Japanese enough’. What is at stake then in the concept of a ‘national’ cinema?

Key Readings:

For Future Reading:
Schrader, Paul (1972) Ozu chapter in his Transcendental Style in Film. University of California.

In many ways the Japanese attitude towards women seems contradictory: good wives and wise mothers vie for media attention with teenaged Lolitas, while vengeful female ghosts seem to haunt the Japanese (and foreign) male. Concurrently, women, particularly young women, are important consumers of Japan’s mass media. What can we learn about gender in Japan from the representations of women and men in its mass media?

Key Readings:

For Future Reading:
4. The Western engagement with 'Cool' Japan: yakuza, ghosts, anime and even more samurai

The concept of Cool Japan was part of its foreign policy as promulgated from the turn of the century – a form of nation branding. This occurred on the crest of the wave of a new Western engagement with Japanese media – particularly with J-Horror and the films of Takeshi Kitano. As Napier puts it, this is the era when Japan exists both as fantasy and its media has created a large fan cult in the West. What can we say about these transcultural movements of images and even products in the post-modern era? How useful are they in creating an understanding of Japanese society?

Key Readings:

For Future Reading: