Religion and Japanese Film Winter 2025

EASIA 275R / RS 275

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Class Schedule

Course	Meet Days	Meet Time	Location	Instructor(s)
EASIA 275R / RS 275 001 [LEC]	**Tuesdays** Jan 6 - Apr 4	10:00AM - 12:50PM	REN 1918	J. Wilson jeff.wilson@uwaterloo.ca (mailto:j...

Instructor & TA (Teaching Assistant) Information

Use the LEARN Course Discussions forum to communicate with your instructor and classmates. Discussion topics can be accessed in LEARN by clicking **Connect** and then **Discussions** on the course navigation bar.

For questions of a personal nature, please email your instructor:

Instructor: Jeff Wilson
jeff.wilson@uwaterloo.ca (mailto:jewilson@uwaterloo.ca)

Office: REN 3104

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2pm and by appointment

Course Description

> *Calendar Description for EASIA 275R / RS 275:*
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> The course examines how religious beliefs and values in Japan are explored in the medium of film.
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> EASIA 275R: View requirements for EASIA 275R (https://acal.fast.uwaterloo.ca/course/1251/EASIA/275R)
>
> RS 275: View requirements for RS 275 (https://acal.fast.uwaterloo.ca/course/1251/RS/275)

Japan is both a deeply traditional nation and one which has experienced rapid technological and social change. The result is an uneasy collision between inherited religious beliefs, social values, and ongoing cultural transformation. Given Japan's status as a major producer of global pop culture (especially visual media), it should come as no surprise that it is in film and related media that modern Japan's religious anxieties and aspirations are often explored.

A Note About Content: Religion engages with, and reflects, the full range of human experience, behaviour, and attitude, including both the best and the ugliest parts of human life. Films, texts, and other media that we will view or read for this course contain a wide range of content, including things that may make individual students uncomfortable or upset. This may include physical or sexual violence, discrimination and prejudice, sexuality or nudity, frightening images and events, self-harm, religious, political, or cultural views at variance with your own, and other potentially disturbing content. Please speak with the instructor if you wish to receive more information about particular types of content.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

Intelligently discuss Japanese religious beliefs, both traditional and contemporary
Demonstrate familiarity with Japanese film spanning a wide range of genres, including animation, drama, and comedy, and develop tools for analyzing films
Consider the matters of kami, modernity, living, killing, dying, death, the dead, the afterlife, and taboos, especially how they are imagined in Japan through the mass medium of film

Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings/Viewings Due
1	Jan 6 – 10	Shintō Lecture Princess Mononoke viewing (at home)	Ōbayashi Taryō, "Shintō and Buddhism in Japan" Margaret Miles, "Moving Shadows: Religion and Film as Cultural Products" and "What You See is What You Get: Religion and Values in Movies" Jolyon Baraka Thomas. "Entertaining Religious Ideas" [SPOILERS] FILM: Mononoke Hime (Princess Mononoke)
2	Jan 13 – 17	*Desu Nōto (Death Note)*	S. Brent Plate, "Introduction: Worldmaking Onscreen and at the Altar"
3	Jan 20 – 24	*Ikiru (To Live)*	James Goodwin, "Modernist Narrative and Intertextuality" [SPOILERS]
4	Jan 27 – Jan 31	*Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*	Carl Becker, "Buddhist Ethics of Death and Dying"
5	Feb 3 – 7	*Wandafuru Raifu (After Life)*	Nathaniel Dorsky, "Devotional Cinema"
6	Feb 10 – 14	Mid-term Test	
	Feb 17	Family Day	
	Feb 17-21	Reading Week	
7	Feb 24 – Feb 18	Buddhism	Jorn Borup. "Contemporary Buddhist Priests and Clergy"
8	Mar 3 – 7	*Zen*	Thomas Cleary, trans. "Dogen" and "Ejo"
9	Mar 10 – 14	*Fanshi Dansu (Fancy Dance)*	Morinaga Sōkō. "My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk" Eshin Nisihimura, *Unsui: A Diary of Zen Monastic Life* (excerpts)
10	Mar 17 – 21	*Biruma no Tategoto (The Burmese Harp)*	Ian Reader, ". . . Die Buddhist: Zen, Death, and the Ancestors"
11	Mar 24 – 28	*Osōshiki (The Funeral)*	Mark Michael Rowe. "The Death of Japanese Buddhism"
12	Mar 31 – Apr 4	*Okuribito (Departures)*	Shinmon Aoki, *Coffinman* (all)

Texts / Materials

Note: Any prices provided in course outlines are best estimates based on recent online prices and do not include shipping or taxes. Prices may vary between retailers.

Title / Name	Notes / Comments	Required	Price (CAD)
Coffinman, by Shinmon Aoki	Three copies are on reserve at the Renison library (students are also welcome to purchase their own copy online if they wish). The cost for this book is therefor $0.	Yes	0
Courseware	The courseware is available for free under fair dealing rules on the course Learn site. The cost for this courseware is therefore $0.	Yes	0

Some of the readings contain spoilers (i.e. discuss details of the plot) for the movies we will be viewing. These readings will be marked prominently. Students may wish to consider delaying their reading of these particular items until after the relevant films have been viewed. Note: we will be viewing many films, all of which will be presented in Japanese, with English subtitles. There is no Japanese-language prerequisite for this course.

Student Assessment

Component	Value
Self-introduction	1%
Course Outline	1%
Attendance	13%
Discussions	20%
Midterm test	25%
Paper	15%
Final exam	25%

SELF-INTRODUCTION: Due January 17
Introduce yourself to the class in the Learn discussion forums. Further instructions are provided in the Forum.

COURSE OUTLINE: Due January 17
Read the entire course outline to learn how to complete this assessment.

ATTENDANCE: Weekly (plus final exam)
Attendance is expected for every class. Attendance will be marked at the start of class.

DISCUSSIONS: Weekly (more or less)
The course Learn site has discussion forums for most weeks. In insightful and detailed posts, the students will respond each week to one of the two regular discussion topics. Students will also read the posts of their classmates, and provide thoughtful responses (minimum two replies, i.e. at least one for each of the two questions per week). Posts and replies should ideally be completed within six days of the end of each class. For further information, see the Discussions instructions document on Learn.

MID-TERM TEST: February 11
An in-class test. Details about the mid-term text will be provided in class.

PAPER: Due April 9
An approximately 5 page paper. For details, see the Paper instructions document on Learn.

FINAL EXAM: During the final exam period (exact date will be announced)
Details about the final exam will be provided in class.

Assignment Screening

Text matching software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin and alternatives in this course. See Administrative Policy and University Policy below for more information and links.

Administrative Policy

LATE OR INCOMPLETE WORK:
Students are expected to do all of the work assigned for this course, and to submit assignments using the Learn dropboxes or discussion forums (as appropriate). Students must do their own work, without help from others or so-called artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT, or Grammarly features that rewrite text). Suspected use of these tools will result in the student being reported to the Associate Dean for possible penalties.

COURSEWORK SUBMISSION POLICY:
Students are expected to do all of the work assigned for this course, and to submit assignments using Learn. Students must do their own work, without help from others or artificial intelligence tools.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided if they wish to submit an alternate assignment.

CROSS-LISTED COURSE:
Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, an RS/EASIA cross-list will count in an EASIA minor average, even if the course was taken under the Religious Studies rubric.

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (GenAI):
This course includes the independent development and practice of specific skills, such as reading comprehension, imaginative engagement, clear expression, and textual analysis. Therefore, the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) trained using large language models (LLM) or other methods to produce text, images, music, or code, like Chat GPT, DALL-E, or GitHub CoPilot, is not permitted in this class: AI may not be used in any way for this course. Unauthorized use in this course, such as running course materials through GenAI or using GenAI to complete a course assessment (as well as asking GenAI for paper idea prompts, to clean up one's writing, or any other use) is considered a violation of Policy 71 (plagiarism or unauthorized aids or assistance). Work produced with the assistance of AI tools does not represent the author's original work and is therefore in violation of the fundamental values of academic integrity including honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and courage (ICAI, n.d.).

You should be prepared to show your work. To demonstrate your learning, you should keep your rough notes, including research notes, brainstorming, and drafting notes. You may be asked to submit these notes along with earlier drafts of their work, either through saved drafts or saved versions of a document. If the use of GenAI is suspected where not permitted, you may be asked to meet with your instructor to provide explanations to support the submitted material as being your original work. Through this process, if you have not sufficiently supported your work, academic misconduct allegations may be brought to the Associate Dean.

In addition, you should be aware that the legal/copyright status of generative AI inputs and outputs is unclear. More information is available from the Copyright Advisory Committee: https://uwaterloo.ca/copyright-at-waterloo/teaching/generative-artificial-intelligence

Students are encouraged to reach out to campus supports if they need help with their coursework including:

• Student Success Office for help with skills like notetaking and time management

• Writing and Communication Centre for assignments with writing or presentations

• AccessAbility Services for documented accommodations

• Library for research-based assignments

After reading the entire course outline, copy and paste this phrase into an email to your instructor by the end of the second week of classes in order to complete the 1% course outline assessment: 宗教と日本の映画

POLICY ON PLAGIARISM:
"Policy 71's glossary defines plagiarism, in part, as "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others (whether attributed or anonymous) as one's own in any work submitted whether or not for grading purposes"...

The Vice-President Academic and Dean has the authority to assess instances of plagiarism and the resultant penalties that are raised by an instructor. An instructor can propose a grade penalty to the Vice-President Academic and Dean, who will decide whether to accept the penalty or initiate a formal inquiry."

For additional information on how plagiarism is dealt with at Renison, review the policy from where the above text is copied: Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

Students should also be aware that copyright laws in Canada prohibit reproducing more than 10% of any work without permission from its author, publisher, or other copyright holder. See Waterloo's policy on Fair Dealing. Violation of Canada's Copyright Act is a punishable academic offence under Policy 71 – Student Discipline.

Turnitin.com: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY:
Students who choose to use electronic devices to support their learning may do so provided that the individuals in the class are not disturbed or prohibited from their own learning. Electronic devices should be used for the purposes of supplementing the learning experience and focus on topics being discussed in class. Phones should be kept on silent during the class.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Attendance is expected at every class. Student who class for any unexcused reason will receive a reduction in their marks.

COMMUNICATION POLICY:
Email, using the uWaterloo provided email address, is the approved method of communication for Renison. The Office 365 email that you use to login using your WatIAM login and password is secure and confidential. Take caution when forwarding your WatIAM email to an external email service as confidential information forwarded to a third-party provider could be a data security breach and violation of FIPPA (Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act) under which all students, staff, and faculty are bound by law.

FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY:
For Winter 2025, the established examination period is April 9-25. The schedule will be available early February. Students should be aware that student travel plans are not acceptable grounds for granting an alternative final examination time. See the Final Examination Schedule.

PRONOUNS AND CHOSEN OR PREFERRED FIRST NAME:
Students can verify their chosen or preferred first name and pronouns by logging into WatIAM. Your chosen or preferred first name and pronouns listed in WatIAM will be used across campus (e.g., in LEARN, Quest, WaterlooWorks, WatCard, etc). Your legal first name will always be used on certain official documents, such as diplomas and transcripts.

Students can add their pronouns in Quest. Should you choose to include your pronouns in Quest, your pronouns will be accessible by instructors, advisors, and employees with access to Quest. If no pronoun is added, the field in Quest will remain blank.

Accommodating religious and spiritual observances

[Applies only to students taking undergraduate courses]

The University of Waterloo has a duty to accommodate religious, spiritual, and other creed-based beliefs and practices (https://ugradcalendar.uwaterloo.ca/page/Acad-Regs-Accommodations) under the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2015) *Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed* (https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed). Students may seek accommodations for missed course components on religious, spiritual, or other creed grounds. In such cases the students should please consult the instructor within two weeks of the announcement of the due date for which the accommodation is being sought. Students also may request accommodations for temporary absences from classes or other course-related activities to engage in prayer or other daily spiritual practices. Instructors are expected to make reasonable arrangements to respectfully accommodate such requests. The University of Waterloo has a number of multi-faith spaces (https://uwaterloo.ca/multi-faith-spirituality-resource-team/multi-faith-spaces-campus) that students can use for faith-based practices.

Declaring absences

[Applies only to students taking undergraduate courses]

Please see the Academic Regulations (https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-calendar/undergraduate-studies/catalog#/policy/SkiPsB9Vp?bc=true&bcCurrent=Assessments%3A%20Academic%20Considerations%20and%20Accommodations&bcGroup=Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies) section of the Undergraduate Calendar for more details. Regardless of the process used to declare an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact their instructor so that the instructor can determine how to accommodate the missed work.

Absences due to religious, creed, and spiritual observances

Beginning Fall 2024, students can submit a Religious Observance Self-Declaration Form in Quest. This form allows the student to register dates of potential conflicts with coursework. Students are expected to record their absence within two weeks of announcement of the due date or scheduled examination date for which academic accommodation is being sought. Submission through Quest will notify your instructors of your absence.

Absences due to verified illness

For absences due to illness that are not pandemic-related, students need to obtain a Verification of Illness or Extenuating Circumstances Process (https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/student-support/accommodations-illness-or-extenuating-circumstances#submit-other). Submission through the Absence Verification System (https://vif.uwaterloo.ca/), once registered, will notify your instructors of your absence. Students should not submit their VIF or any other medical documentation to your instructors, teaching assistants, or other course personnel. To request and arrange accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within 48 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as the student is able to given their health condition.

Absences due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement)

For absences due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement, serious family illness), students submit a request for absence due to extenuating circumstances (https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/student-support/accommodations-illness-or-extenuating-circumstances#submit-other) to the Absence Verification System (https://vif.uwaterloo.ca/) for processing. Students use the form to submit supporting documentation, which will be considered in a comparable manner to a VIF. Official documentation is necessary before any action can be taken. Examples are plane/train/bus tickets, court documents, police reports, death certificates/obituaries/letters from funeral directors. To request and arrange accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within 48 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as the student is able to given their circumstances.

Self-declared absences due to COVID-related illness

Students can self-declare (https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-absence-undergraduate-students) an absence on Quest due to COVID-related illness or a requirement to self-isolate. A self-declared COVID absence covers up to 10 days and no documentation is required. No in-person course activity is permitted during the period of a self-declared COVID absence. Participation in on-line components is permitted but should not be required if the student notifies the instructor that they are too ill to participate in the online work. Submitting the self-declaration through Quest will notify your

instructors of your absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact their instructors within the first 48 hours after submitting their COVID-related absence, or as soon as they are well enough, to discuss arrangements for missed course components.

Self-declared short-term absences for any reason

Students can self-declare (https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-absence-undergraduate-students) one short-term absence per term on Quest for any reason. A short-term absence covers two calendar days, and no documentation is required. The student has only one self-declared short-term absence per term and this absence can only be used during the formal lecture period. Self-declared absences cannot be applied to Laboratory (LAB), Clinic (CLN), or Studio (STU) course components. Submitting the self-declaration through Quest will notify your instructors of your absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact their instructors within the first 24 hours after submitting their self-declaration to discuss accommodations for missed course components.

Recording lecture

Use of recording devices during lectures is only allowed with explicit permission of the instructor of the course. If allowed, video recordings may only include images of the instructor and not fellow classmates. Posting of videos or links to the video to any website, including but not limited to social media sites such as: Facebook, Twitter, etc., is strictly prohibited.

University Policy

Academic integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity (https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4 (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70) . When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity (https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71) . For typical penalties, check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties) .

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70) (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72) .

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services (https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/) , located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

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It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit alternate assignment.