



AFFILIATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

**Renison University College**  
Affiliated with the University of Waterloo  
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## **Renison University College Land Acknowledgement**

With gratitude, we acknowledge that Renison University College is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Hodinohsyó:ni, and Attawandaran (Neutral) Peoples, which is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land granted to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River from mouth to source. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place in all corners of our campus through research, learning, teaching, community building, and outreach. We are guided by the work of our Anti-Racism and Decolonization SpokesCouncil, and the [University of Waterloo Office of Indigenous Relations](#).

## **Spring 2024**

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**Course Code: EASIA 275R/RS 275**

**Course Title: Religion in Japanese Film**

***Online, asynchronous***

***Office Hours: by appointment***

### **Course Description**

Japan is both a deeply traditional nation and one of the most technologically advanced societies. The result is an uneasy collision between inherited religious beliefs, social values, and rapid cultural change. 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. This term we will examine the intersection of these various forces in contemporary Japanese society.

### **Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Intelligently discuss Japanese religious beliefs, both traditional and contemporary
  - Demonstrate knowledge of Buddhism, Shinto, and other traditional religious systems
  - Demonstrate understanding of how religious beliefs and practices are changing in the contemporary world
- B. Develop familiarity with Japanese film spanning a range of genres, including animation, drama, and comedy, and develop tools for analyzing films.
  - Cultivate knowledge of various famous, important, and/or representative works of Japanese cinema
  - Apply theories and perspectives from Film Studies to works of Japanese cinema
- C. Consider the matters of kami, modernity, tradition, living, killing, dying, death, the dead, the afterlife, and taboos, especially how they are imagined in Japan through the mass medium of film.
  - Critically interpret major themes in Japanese religion and film
  - Clearly communicate insights about Japanese religion and film

**A Note About Content:** Films, books, and other media that we will view or read for this course contain a wide range of content, including things that may make students uncomfortable or upset. This may include physical or sexual violence, discrimination, sexuality or nudity, religious or cultural views at variance with your own, frightening images and events, and other potentially disturbing content. Please speak with the instructor if you wish to receive more information about particular types of content.

### **Required Text**

- Coffinman, by Shinmon Aoki
- Courseware pack

There is one required textbook for this course: Coffinman by Shinmon Aoki. There is also a required courseware pack. Both are on reserve in the Renison library—but you can also download the courseware for free from our course Learn site (look under Content). 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.

## Course Requirements and Assessment

Information on course requirements and assessments.

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Date of Evaluation (if known)</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
Film response papers	Weekly (mostly)	50%
Film review paper 1	June 9	10%
Film review paper 2	July 18	10%
Film review paper 3	July 22	10%
Summative paper	July 27	20%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### *Film Response Papers*

We will view ten films this term. For each film, the students will write a response to prompts provided on Learn. For details, see the Film Response Papers instructions document on Learn.

### *Film Review Paper 1*

An approximately 1500 word paper. For details, see the Film Review Papers instructions document on Learn.

### *Film Review Paper 2*

An approximately 1500 word paper. For details, see the Film Review Papers instructions document on Learn.

### *Film Review Paper 3*

An approximately 1500 word paper. For details, see the Film Review Papers instructions document on Learn.

### *Summative Paper*

A final paper that engages with themes of the course. For details, see the Summative Paper instructions document on Learn.

## Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Readings Due
1	May 6 – 10	<i>Mononoke Hime (Princess Mononoke)</i>	<p>Ōbayashi Taryō, “Shintō and Buddhism in Japan”</p> <p>Margaret Miles, “Moving Shadows: Religion and Film as Cultural Products” and “What You See is What You Get: Religion and Values in Movies”</p> <p>Jolyon Baraka Thomas. “Entertaining Religious Ideas” [SPOILERS]</p>
2	May 13 – 17	<i>Desu Nōto (Death Note)</i>	S. Brent Plate, “Introduction: Worldmaking Onscreen and at the Altar”
	May 20	Victoria Day	
3	May 21 – 24	<i>Ikiru (To Live)</i>	James Goodwin, “Modernist Narrative and Intertextuality” [SPOILERS]
	May 21 (Monday schedule used. Make-up day for Victoria Day)		
4	May 27 – 31	<i>Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters</i>	Carl Becker, “Buddhist Ethics of Death and Dying”
5	June 3 - 7	<i>Wandafuru Raiifu (After Life)</i>	Nathaniel Dorsky, “Devotional Cinema”
6	June 10 – 14	Zen	<p>Jorn Borup. “Contemporary Buddhist Priests and Clergy”</p> <p>Thomas Cleary, trans. “Dogen” and “Ejo”</p>
7	June 17 – 21	<i>Fanshi Dansu (Fancy Dance)</i>	<p>Morinaga Sōkō. “My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk”</p> <p>Eshin Nisihimura, <i>Unsui: A Diary of Zen Monastic Life</i> (excerpts)</p>
8	June 24 – 28	<i>Biruma no Tategoto (The Burmese Harp)</i>	Ian Reader, “. . . Die Buddhist: Zen, Death, and the Ancestors”
	July 1	Canada Day	

Week	Date	Topic	Readings Due
9	July 2 – 5	<i>Osōshiki (The Funeral)</i>	Mark Michael Rowe. “The Death of Japanese Buddhism”
10	July 8 – 12	<i>Okuribito (Departures)</i>	Shinmon Aoki, Coffinman (all)
11	July 15 – 19	Student-chosen films	None
12	July 22 – 26	Summative Paper	None
	July 29	Make-up Day for Canada Day	
	July 30	Make-up day for May 21	

### **Late or Incomplete Work**

Students should make every effort to submit their assignments on time. Late work will be deducted cumulatively at 10% each day that the assignment is late, including weekends. If a student anticipates a conflict with an assignment deadline or has concerns about completing the assignment, the student should contact the instructor as soon as possible once the realization is made.

### **Coursework Submission Policy**

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

### **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.

### **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. 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.**

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)**

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. Unauthorized use in this course, such as running course materials through GenAI or using GenAI to complete a course assessment (including brainstorming ideas or receiving additional information) 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 or TA 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

### **Electronic Device Policy**

As there are no scheduled meetings or classes, use of electronic devices is not restricted, except to the extent that it would violate other policies found on this course outline.

### **Attendance Policy**

As this course is online and asynchronous, there is no regular attendance policy. Should one or more meetings become necessary, students are required to attend. Failure to do so will result in a penalty of 10 marks off the final grade.

### **Communication Policy**

Email, using the uWaterloo provided email address, is the approved method of communication with UWaterloo faculty, staff, and students. The Office 365 email that you use to login using your WatIAM login and password is secure and confidential.

### **Final Examination Policy**

There is no final exam in this course.

### **Accommodation for Illness or Unforeseen Circumstances**

The instructor follows the practices of the University of Waterloo in accommodating students who have documented reasons for missing quizzes or exams. See [Accommodation due to illness](#).

### **Accommodation Due to Religious Observances**

The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may seek accommodations on religious grounds. Accordingly, students must consult with their instructor(s) within two weeks of the announcement of the due date for which accommodation is being sought. Failure to provide a timely request will decrease the likelihood of providing an accommodation. [See Request for accommodation on religious grounds](#).

## **Academic Integrity, Grievance, Discipline, Appeals and Note for Students with Disabilities**

**Academic Integrity:** To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity](#) websites for more information.

Renison University College is committed to the view that when a problem or disagreement arises between a faculty member and a student every effort should be made to resolve the problem through mutual and respectful negotiation. Most issues are resolved by a student/faculty meeting to discuss differences of opinion. It is only after this stage, when a common understanding or agreement is not obtained that further actions listed below could be taken.

**Discipline:** Every student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their own actions. [Check the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) website 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 professor or academic advisor. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties are imposed under the University of Waterloo [Policy 71 – Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**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](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the Department’s administrative assistant, or Academic Advisor, who will provide further assistance.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#) 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](#).

**Academic Integrity Office (UWaterloo):** The website can be found at [uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/](http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/)



## **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

[AccessAbility Services](#) is located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, and 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.

Students are encouraged to register with AccessAbility Services (AAS) at the start of each term if they require accommodations due to a disability. However, some students not connected to AAS may require accommodations later in the term. In that case, you should immediately consult with your instructor and/or your Academic Advisor.

## **Intellectual Property**

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of the instructor, which can include:

- lecture handouts and presentations (e.g., PowerPoint slides)
- lecture content, both spoken and written (and any audio or video recording thereof)
- questions from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams)
- work protected by copyright (i.e., any work authored by the instructor)

Making available the intellectual property of instructors without their express written consent (e.g., uploading lecture notes or assignments to an online repository) is considered theft of intellectual property and subject to disciplinary sanctions as described in [Policy 71 – Student Discipline](#). Students who become aware of the availability of what may be their instructor’s intellectual property in online repositories are encouraged to alert the instructor.

## **Mental Health Support**

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health supports if they are needed.

## **On Campus**

- [Counselling Services](#): counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4096
- [MATES](#): one-to-one peer support program offered by the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Counselling Services

- [Health Services](#) – Student Medical Clinic: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

### **Off Campus, 24/7**

- [Good2Talk](#): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- [Empower Me](#): Confidential, multilingual, culturally sensitive, faith inclusive mental health and wellness service.
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 844-437-3247
- [Here 24/7](#): Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- [OK2BME](#): set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning teens in Waterloo. Email: [ok2bme@caminowellbeing.ca](mailto:ok2bme@caminowellbeing.ca) Phone: 519-884-0000

Full details can be found online at the [Faculty of ARTS](#) website.

Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

Download the [WatSafe](#) app to your phone to quickly access mental health support information.

### **A Respectful Living and Learning Environment for All**

Everyone living, learning, and working at Renison University College is expected to contribute to creating a respectful environment free from harassment and discrimination.

Harassment is unwanted attention in the form of disrespectful comments, unwanted text messages or images, degrading jokes, rude gestures, unwanted touching, or other behaviours meant to intimidate.

According to the Ontario Human Rights Code, discrimination means unequal or different treatment causing harm, whether intentional or not, because of race, disability, citizenship, ethnic origin, colour, age, creed, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, or other personal characteristic.

If you feel that you are experiencing the above from any member of the Renison community (students, staff, or faculty), you may contact Melissa Knox, Renison’s external anti-harassment and anti-discrimination officer, by email ([mnknox@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mnknox@uwaterloo.ca)) or by phone or text (226-753-5669). Melissa is an employment and human rights lawyer and part-time Assistant Crown Attorney for the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General. Melissa is experienced in case management, discipline and complaints processes, and works with organizations across Canada

to foster safe, respectful, and inclusive work and learning environments through policy development, educational workshops, conflict mediation and dispute resolution, and organizational culture audits.

For additional information see Renison's [Harassment, Discrimination, and Abuse](#) policy.