



KIIS Japan Program, Summer 2024

FILM 399 / ARC 401 Topics: Atomic Cinema: Visual Representations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Instructor: Prof. Raymond De Luca

Email: rdeluca@uky.edu

Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description

This class will consider cinematic responses to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki launched by the United States in August 1945. Some of the most destructive events in human history, the nuclear bombings of Japan have captivated the imagination of filmmakers as societies and individuals have struggled to come to terms with both the disaster itself and the possibility of future nuclear war. We will explore how the conflict has been aestheticized, discussed, allegorized, and re-created on screen in nationally oriented Japanese films, such as Kaneto Shindo's *Children of Hiroshima* (1952), Hideo Sekigawa's *Hiroshima* (1953), Ishirō Honda's *Godzilla* (1954), and Shohei Imamura's *Black Rain* (1989), but also in films of a more international scope, like Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror* (1975). This class will familiarize students with the historical context leading up to the bombings, and it will equip them with the skills needed for film analysis more broadly.

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The

purpose of the exercise is to help KISS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate:

- (1) Working knowledge of the causes and impact of the nuclear catastrophe in Japan in 1945.
- (2) Familiarity with different filmmakers' aesthetic, political, and psychological engagement with the atomic bombings, both inside and outside of Japan.
- (3) Analytical facility over the generic and stylistic conventions of cinema.
- (4) Improve proficiency with academic prose and reflection through a series of short writing assignments.
- (5) An ability to connect films to questions of a particular society's historical memory and trauma.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

We will watch *eight* films throughout the summer term (all films will be made available online, with subtitles); this averages out to two films per week.

- *Hiroshima* (dir., Hideo Sekigawa, 1953)
- *Godzilla* (dir., Ishirō Honda, 1954)
- *Hiroshima, mon amour* (dir., Alan Resnais, 1959)
- *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (dir., Stanley Kubrick, 1964)
- *Mirror* (dir., Andrei Tarkovsky, 1975)
- *Black Rain* (dir., Shōhei Imamura, 1989)
- *Dreams* (dir., Akira Kurosawa, 1990)
- *Oppenheimer* (dir., Christopher Nolan, 2023)

5. Required Readings and Materials:

- A collection of online resources, videos, images, and essays made accessible by the Instructor.

6. Graded Assignments:

- (1) In-class participation: 20%

Our classes will be discussion-based, so coming prepared with comments and questions about each of our films will be essential to your learning. This class will depend on all of us to actively contribute as we explore these challenging films.

(2) In-class presentation (i.e., close-watching): 15%

Each student (or small teams of students) will be assigned one of our films to do a “close-watching” for the rest of the group. A “close-watching” consists of selecting a single image or scene (about 5 to 30 seconds) of a film and analyzing how this small part relates to the larger movie. What cinematographic strategies are being deployed here (lighting, camera angle, montage, etc.), and to what effect? The goal in this assignment is to think and hypothesize out loud with your peers and demonstrate how a small part of a film can reflect broader ideas about the whole.

(3) Movie Review essay (1 page): 15%

You will select one of the films that we have watched in class and “review” it in the style of a professional critic. What about this movie did you like? Or not like? Who does it appeal to? How does it depict the nuclear catastrophe? Is it effective in executing its message? Be careful to write your review without spoiling it for audiences; a sampling of film reviews will be distributed beforehand as examples.

(4) Compare & Contrast essay (2 – 3 pages): 20%

For this essay, you will select one of the films on our syllabus by a Japanese filmmaker and another from one of our international directors. You will then compare and contrast the two. How does each director differently portray the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Hypothesize about what might account for these differences or similarities: culture, politics, time period, etc.?

(5) Theoretical / Reflective Essay (3 – 4 pages): 30%

You will reflect on how your experiences in Japan and with Japanese culture have been shaped by these films’ depictions of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. How have these films made you think differently about this historical tragedy? What have these films, in complement with your experiences abroad, taught you that you did not know before? Why is cinema itself such an important medium for understanding the legacy of the bombings? In your reflective essay, you should cite a *minimum* of two examples from two different films that we have watched together. The goal of this assignment is for you to integrate our films into your own experience and engagement with Japanese society, history, and culture over the past several weeks. How have our films, in other words, enriched your time in Japan?

7. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

8. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

9. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/eeo/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.