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**Review Essay Instructions**  
**Japan 165 Popular Culture in Japan**

<b>Due Dates (by 11:59PM Pacific Time)</b>	
Part 1	6/29
Part 2	7/6
Part 3	7/17
Revision Notes	8/2
Final Draft	8/2

The main project for this course is the **REVIEW ESSAY**. It is worth 40% of your final grade, plus a possible 1% of extra credit. It is a step-by-step process through which you will analyze a specific Japanese cultural product academically and then place it in socio-cultural context. You will be graded for each part of the assignment. On the early parts, you will be graded simply for doing the work and turning it in on time, but on the final draft you will be graded based on the strength of your analysis and the ways that you use texts to support it.

**CITATION NOTE:** All citations should be made in MLA or Chicago style, and all should be made in the same style (do not mix MLA and Chicago).

**Week 1: Part 1 (5% of your course grade)**

1. Choose a Japanese cultural product that you are familiar with—it can be something you love or even something you hate. This choice will be the basis for all three parts of the essay, so it should be something you are willing to spend some time thinking and writing about. Consider the following guidelines when making your choice:

- If you choose a **film**, it should be feature-length (no short films or OAVs under one hour)
- If you choose a **TV show or anime series**, watch at least four sequential episodes (if one episode is under 20 minutes, then watch at least six). Choose episodes that you think will be meaningful or interesting to analyze—that may be the *last* four episodes in a series, or four in the middle that make up a particularly interesting story arc, for example.
- If you choose a **manga** series, read at least four sequential issues. Choose issues that you think will be meaningful or interesting to analyze—that may be the *last* four issues in a series, or four in the middle that make up a particularly interesting story arc, for example.
- **I do not recommend video games** because they take a lot of time and it can be difficult to go back and analyze specific dialogue, cut scenes, etc. However, if you wish to choose a video game, please contact me first with your plan and we can discuss how to make it work.
- If you want to do **something else** (novel, album, art installation, etc.), please contact me first so that we can talk about how much content is appropriate.
- Films assigned for the course weekly screenings are acceptable, except for *Queer Japan* (due to limited access).
- You can use **subtitles, dubs, translations**, or even base your analysis on the original Japanese language, if you are proficient. However, please use **only official translations, subtitles, etc., not fan-made versions**.

2. In 100-200 words, answer the following questions about the cultural product that you have chosen. Please write in paragraph form.
  - a. Contents: What is it about? What is the genre?
  - b. Production: Who made it, when, through which studio/company/label?
  - c. Consumption: What are the demographics of fans in Japan and around the world?
  - d. Reception: How famous or popular is the work in Japan and around the world? Did it win any awards?
3. Include **full citations** for any websites or other sources you use to gather information about consumption and reception. Remember that Wikipedia is not an acceptable source, but it can often lead to more official sources of information. Citations do not count toward the word count.
4. Write the word count at the end of the document.
5. Submit the assignment via GauchoSpace by 11:59PM on **Monday 6/29**.
6. You will receive full points for the assignment if:
  - It is about a Japanese cultural product, and
  - It was submitted on time, and
  - It answers the questions about contents, production, consumption, and reception listed above, and
  - It is within 100-200 words, and
  - No part of it is plagiarized.

**Week 2: Part 2 (6% of your course grade)**

1. Using the feedback you received on Part 1, revise Part 1 and mark any additions you make in **red text**.
2. Copy-paste your revised Part 1 into the beginning of your Part 2 document. Part 1 introduces your cultural product and Part 2 will add a more detailed analysis.
3. In 300-400 words, complete the following two sections:
  - a. Choose one of the following:
    - 1) Find at least two interviews with the creator. What messages or images did they wish to communicate with this cultural product? Describe their intentions and then offer your own evaluation of how successful (or not) the creator was in achieving those intentions.
    - 2) Read at least two reviews of the cultural property by professional critics. What are their interpretations of the meaning and images of the cultural product? What is your evaluation of their critiques—what do you think they got right, and what did they get wrong?

- 3) Read at least one scholarly article (a journal article or a chapter in a scholarly book<sup>1</sup>, *assigned readings from this course do not count*) about the cultural product or its creator. What is the scholar's conclusion about the meaning of the piece and/or the creator's intentions? What is your evaluation of the scholar's argument?
  - b. Find at least two different discussion threads where fans or other consumers discuss the meaning of the cultural product—websites like Reddit or user reviews on IMDB or Amazon are good examples of where to find these. Read at least six entries from each thread and summarize common ideas about meanings or problems that consumers found in the cultural product. What is your evaluation of these consumers' interpretations? How do their interpretations differ from those of the creator, critics, or scholar whose work you read for the previous section?
4. Include **full citations** for any websites or other sources you use to gather information for this section. Also include your full citations from any sources you used in Part 1. Citations do not count toward the word count.
  5. Write the word count at the end of the document.
  6. Submit the assignment via GauchoSpace by 11:59PM on **Monday 7/6**.
  7. You will receive full points for the assignment if:
    - It was submitted on time, and
    - It answers one set of questions from section 3a of the instructions, and
    - It answers all of the questions in section 3b of the instructions, and
    - It is within 300-400 words, and
    - It is revised to incorporate feedback from Part 1, and
    - No part of it is plagiarized.

### **Weeks 3-4: Part 3 (7% of your course grade)**

1. Using the feedback you received on Part 2, revise Part 2 and mark any additions you make in **red text**.
2. Copy-paste your revised Parts 1&2 into the beginning of your Part 3 document. Parts 1 and 2 introduce your cultural product and offer interpretations of what it means. In part 3, you will consider what the product suggests about Japanese society.
3. In 400-600 words, what does this cultural product reveal about Japanese society more generally? You can focus on the contents, production, consumption, or interpretation(s) of the product, or perhaps a combination of several of these aspects. Your paper should focus on something about the structure of Japanese society and culture: good examples of topics would be what the story says about gender roles in Japan, or what fans' reactions suggest about attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Japan, or what American critics' reactions can tell us

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<sup>1</sup> If you are unsure whether a source counts as scholarly, contact the instructor for help.

about American stereotypes of Japanese culture. Bad examples of topics include what the cultural product teaches us about Japanese tea ceremony or Japanese architecture, or what the success of a film tells us about effective marketing strategies, or why one anime is so fun and wonderful and popular. If you have questions about your topic for Part 3, please contact the instructor.

4. Use at least one course reading to support your analysis about Japanese society. You are welcome to use **ONE** additional academic source. Do not use non-academic sources.

**\*\*IMPORTANT NOTE\*\***: It is impossible to form a complete picture of Japan from one cultural product (imagine, for example, an analysis of American people based only on *Game of Thrones* or *American Horror Story*). Therefore, it is very important that you acknowledge the limitations of your analysis. To avoid overgeneralization and show that you are only looking at a small slice of Japan, use language that highlights your limitations. For example, instead of saying “Gender roles in Japan are \_\_\_,” use something like “This manga suggests that gender roles in Japan are \_\_\_”; and instead of saying “Japanese people do not like \_\_\_,” use something like “It appears that the studio thought their consumers would not like \_\_\_.”

5. Include **full citations** for the course readings that you cite and your one optional outside source. Also include your full citations from any sources you used in Parts 1&2. Citations do not count toward the word count.

6. Write the word count at the end of the document.

7. Submit the assignment via GauchoSpace by 11:59PM on **Friday 7/17**.

8. You will receive full points for the assignment if:

- It was submitted on time, and
- It links your cultural product to Japanese society, and
- It does not make generalizations about Japan (see the IMPORTANT NOTE), and
- It includes support from at least one course reading and no more than one outside reading, and
- It is within 400-600 words, and
- It is revised to incorporate feedback from Part 2, and
- No part of it is plagiarized.

**Weeks 5-6: Revision Notes (2% of your course grade, + 1% possible extra credit)**

1. You will receive feedback on Part 3 before you begin the final version.

2. Make a bullet-point list describing every change that you make to the final version. If that change is in response to specific feedback from Part 3, mention which feedback you are responding to. Full sentences are not necessary. For example, you might write “added limiting expressions to fix generalizations noted in feedback,” or “added a quote from the Yano reading to support the unsupported point noted in feedback.”

3. If your feedback on Part 3 suggests a change and you did not make that change, explain your choice—did you feel that change was unnecessary (and why)? Did you fix the problem in a different way?
4. **OPTIONAL:** Write a reflective paragraph (no more than fifty words) describing how your opinion or understanding of the cultural product that you chose has changed through writing this essay. Do you still love/hate it? Do you see it differently now? Have you found parts you never noticed before? **This paragraph is worth extra credit equal to +1% to your final course grade.**
5. Submit the assignment via Gauchospace by 11:59PM on **Sunday 8/2**.
6. You will receive full points for the assignment if:
  - It was submitted on time, and
  - It accurately reflects the steps you took and decisions you made to revise your paper, and
  - [Optional] It includes a reflective paragraph, and
  - No part of it is plagiarized.

#### **Weeks 5-6: Final Draft (20% of your course grade)**

1. Revise parts 1-3 one last time, paying careful attention to the feedback you have received.
2. Include a full bibliography listing every source that you cite.
3. Submit the assignment via Gauchospace by 11:59PM on **Sunday 8/2**.
4. You will receive full points for the assignment if:
  - It was submitted on time, and
  - It accurately introduces the key information about a Japanese cultural product (Part 1), and
  - It offers thoughtful, well-reasoned, and original evaluations of two different perspectives on the meaning of the cultural product (Part 2), and
  - It connects the cultural product to its larger social context, demonstrating how pop culture can inform or influence our understanding of Japanese society (part 3), and
  - Each section is supported by meaningful quotations from trustworthy sources, and
  - No part of it is plagiarized.



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