

Gender Construction in Japanese Manga

Spring 2012

Course: Gender Construction in Japanese Manga, Course code: 87640

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Pre-requisite knowledge: Although it is preferred but not required, it is helpful if students possess prior experience with manga. Regarding topics, students are asked to be open minded with discussing sensitive topics such as homosexuality. Though it would be helpful to have some knowledge of gender-related issues and theory, it is not required for the class.

Seminar description: Japanese manga, also commonly known as graphic novels in English, are usually viewed as having little intellectual substance, since they are often classified as “comic books.” However, this course will debunk this misconception by exploring the intellectual qualities of various manga. Although manga is very visual with minimal written narrative, it offers a different sense of beauty, artistry, and connection for the audience. Unlike novels, manga create a fictional visual world in which readers are able to directly immerse themselves. The course will analyze the construction of gender both narratively and visually. By comparing the visual representations to the dialogue, the class will explore gender-related topics such as the balance of masculinity and femininity, sexuality, love, and power. We will also discuss the implications of what these general themes signify for not only the story itself but also the audience. *Students will learn not only the basics of gender theory but also skills of visual analysis which they may apply to any visual media.*

Texts: All required readings will be found online. The main manga to be used will be:

- *Toriko* by Shimabukuro Mitsutoshi
 - In the world where the taste and texture of food are very important there is Toriko: a hunter of precious foods regularly hired by restaurants and the rich. He is a man with superhuman skills that he uses to capture ferocious, evasive and rare animals to complete his ultimate dinner course. His current accomplice, a weak, timid person, but who was inspired by Toriko's greatness, accompanies him on all his journeys on his quest for the meal of his life.
 - <http://www.mangareader.net/349/toriko.html>
- *Rose of Versailles* by Ikeda Riyoko
 - Oscar, the story's central character and a creation of Ikeda, is a girl raised by her father as a man, who commands the palace guards at Versailles. Her beauty, ambiguous sexuality, and noble spirit make her a shining

figure in the eyes of both men and women, but she herself is often torn between her chosen life of service and duty to her class and country, and her own heart and desires. She lives a splendid life as a noble among the opulence of Versailles and as a close confidant of the Queen. But this cannot blind her keen senses and compassion to the appalling poverty endured by the French people. Oscar's struggle with this duality in her world and within herself is the center about which the story turns.

- http://www.mangafox.com/manga/rose_of_versailles/
- *Kunisaki Izumo no Jijou* by Hirakawa Aya:
 - Izumo Kunisaki, a descendant of Izumo no Okuni (the founder of the kabuki art), is often mistaken as a girl. It is the bane of his existence. His father and best-friend (i.e. the girl he likes) often laugh about it. To top it off, he plays the girl roles in his family's Kabuki troupe. In this short, he discovers that that curse is also his greatest source strength and will prove just how much of a man he is.
 - http://www.mangafox.com/manga/kunisaki_izumo_no_jijou/

Grades: Since this class is a one-unit Pass/No Pass class, the grades will be solely determined by participation in the classroom and the final project.

- Attendance & Participation: Students are expected to attend classes regularly. However, attendance is not enough. Students must attend as well as participate in the discussion. Failure to participate will result in no attendance and credit for that day. If you must miss a class, see me, preferably in advance, so that we may come up with an alternative activity to keep you on track with the rest of the class.
- Group Project: Students must complete and present the group project on the final day of the seminar class. Failure to participate and present the project will result in a “no pass” grade.

Student Responsibilities: Students are expected to be respectful of not only their peers but also the instructor. This seminar will be a discussion based class and thus please respect others' opinions. In addition, students are responsible for coming to class with the readings accomplished.

Schedule:

	Topic	Due Readings
Week 1	Introduction and History of Manga	
Week 2	Masculinity versus Femininity Part 1	<i>Toriko</i> : Chapters 1, 114-123 <i>Rose of Versailles</i> : Chapters 2, 11-12
Week 3	Masculinity versus Femininity Part 2	<i>Toriko</i> : Chapters 30, 43, 47
Week 4	Power & Patriarch	<i>Kunisaki Izumo no Jijou</i> : Chapters 1-4, 20
Week 5	Male Gaze	<i>Toriko</i> : Chapters 22-24 Review: <i>Kunisaki Izumo no Jijou</i> : Chapters 1-4, 20 <i>Rose of Versailles</i> : Chapters 2, 11-12 Read the following web essay: http://www.uvm.edu/~tstreete/powerpose/index.html
Week 6	Gender as Performance	Review: <i>Kunisaki Izumo no Jijou</i> : Chapters 1-4, 20 <i>Rose of Versailles</i> : Chapters 2, 11-12
Week 7	Sexuality	<i>Toriko</i> : Chapter 142 <i>Rose of Versailles</i> : Chapter 21-22
Week 8	The Power of Truth	Review: <i>Kunisaki Izumo no Jijou</i> : Chapters 1-4, 20 <i>Rose of Versailles</i> : Chapters 2, 11-12
Week 9	Gender Foils & Gender Flipping	Review: <i>Toriko</i> : Chapters 1, 114-123 <i>Kunisaki Izumo no Jijou</i> : Chapters 1-4, 20 <i>Rose of Versailles</i> : Chapters 2, 11-12
Week 10	Final Class Presentations	Group Class Presentations DUE

****Schedule is subjected to change.**