Digital Media in Japan and Korea

Fall 2019 - 21G.067/21G.597

Prof. Paul Roquet  proquet@mit.edu
Class: Tuesday 7-10pm in 4-249
Office Hours: Tues. 2-4pm or by appt. in 14N-334
Webpage: https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/1783

Course Description
In this course we examine the cultural dimensions of digital media in Japan and South Korea. The class engages with the internet, social media, video games, robots, and mixed realities. By considering how these media have been woven into new cultural and expressive practices in both countries, we will work towards the comparative study of digital life beyond the US context. There are no language or course prerequisites for 21G.067. 21G.597, the Japanese Language Option, includes a short additional written assignment in Japanese. See website for additional course policies.

Student Responsibilities
1. In-class engagement + brief weekly quote-post to website by Tues 5pm (25%)
2. Influencer Report: 800-word close reading of a J/K social media account w/ short presentation (10%) - 9/27
3. Platform Analysis group presentation + discussion (10%) – 10/22
4. Game Report: 800-word close reading of a J/K video game (10%) - 11/12
5. Research Project – may take the form of a website, video essay, or other digital text (~1000-1500 words):
   a. Project proposal (5%) – 11/15
   b. Draft + peer review (10%) – 12/3
   c. Publish final version (10%) – 12/10
   d. Present project during last week of class (10%) – 12/10

Note: All readings will be made available in pdf form on the website. See website for assignment instructions. Students enrolled in 21G.597 should work with Japanese-language materials for 2 & 5 above, and will also produce a short Japanese-language supplement to the research project. Consult with me for further details.

Course Policies
- **Attendance**: Regular on-time attendance is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will adversely affect your participation grade. Email me ahead of time w/documentation if there is a particular reason you cannot attend.
- **Participation**: This is a discussion-based course, and you are expected to come to class having read the materials carefully and ready to discuss. Always bring your copy of the essays (with your notes and questions) to class.
• **Late Work:** 10% of the given grade will be subtracted for every 24 hours late. One extension *may* be granted due to inescapable conflicts if you email me ahead of the deadline with an alternate due date that would work for you. Note the final project draft and final version are not eligible for extensions due to scheduling constraints.

• **Inclusive Classroom:** I am committed to creating an inclusive classroom environment where difficult topics can be discussed and opinions can be shared based on a foundation of mutual trust and respect. We will be discussing some uncomfortable and controversial topics, and you should be prepared to be challenged intellectually and exposed to a wide range of beliefs. However, at no time should anyone be singled out or treated unequally based on parts of their identity (visible or invisible). If you ever have any concerns about harassment, discrimination, or unequal treatment in any course-related activity, please let me know. I will take your communication seriously and seek a mutually acceptable resolution, and reporting will never impact your grade. Note faculty and staff will protect your privacy as much as possible, but are officially required to report information in some cases (e.g., sexual harassment).

• **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is the foundation of all scholarship, because being able to trace how our ideas have developed in relation to other people’s theories, research, and evidence, as well as our own, is what ensures the soundness of our research. Thus university communities have a collective investment in ensuring that the practices of academic integrity are thoroughly learned and carefully practiced. As members of this class and the larger scholarly community you are expected to abide by the norms of academic integrity. Everything you submit must be your own work, written specifically for this class. While a good deal of collaboration is encouraged in and out of class, all sources—of ideas as well as words and images, whether from a friend, a text, or the internet—must be acknowledged according to the conventions of academic citation. Willful disregard for these conventions—i.e., plagiarism—can result in withdrawal from the course with a grade of F, and/or suspension or expulsion from the Institute. For more information about policies and practices, please refer to the MIT Policy on Academic Integrity: [integrity.mit.edu](http://integrity.mit.edu). *If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of a particular assignment, whether a source is reliable, or how to properly cite, contact me before submission.*

• **MIT Writing Center:** I strongly suggest taking advantage of the excellent resources offered to MIT students at the Writing Center, which provides expert feedback on both written and spoken communication. They can help you with every stage of the writing and presentation assignments in this class. See: [http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/](http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/)

• **Accommodations:** Any student with a documented disability or individual accessibility needs is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange appropriate accommodations. As part of this process, you may wish to be in touch with MIT Student Disabilities Services.

• **Student Hours (aka Office Hours):** Student hours are a dedicated window each week where anyone enrolled in the class can stop by to consult with me about anything related to the course or your academic life at MIT. You might arrive with specific questions about an assignment, but it can also just be something from the course materials you are curious about and want to discuss more. If Tues 2-4 does not work for your schedule, email and we can usually find an alternate time to meet during the week.

### Schedule

9/10. What is/was Digital Media?
9/17. Chat Rooms
- Katsuno & Yano, “Kaomoji and Expressivity in a Japanese Housewives’ Chat Room”
- Kim, “#iamafeminist as the ‘Mother Tag’: Feminist Identification and Activism Against Misogyny on Twitter in South Korea”

9/24. Experiments with Identity & Anonymity
- Nozawa, “Gross Face and Virtual Fame: Semiotic Mediation in Japanese Virtual Communication”
- Yang, “‘Loser’ Aesthetics: Korean Internet Freaks and Gender Politics”

10/1. Live Streaming & Media Convergence
- Hong and Park, “Internet Mukbang (Foodcasting) in South Korea”
- Johnson, “Anxious Proximity: Media Convergence, Celebrity, and Internet Negativity”
- **Influencer Presentations 1 (in class)**

10/8. Platform Imperialism?
- Steinberg, excerpt from The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet
- **Influencer presentations 2 (in class)**

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10/22. **Group Platform Analysis Presentations (in class)**

10/29. Games as Cultural Analysis
- Whaley, “Virtual Earthquakes and Real-World Survival in Japan’s Disaster Report Video Game”
- Dumas, “Asumenia: Strategic Accumulation and Networks of Desire in Collection-Based Smartphone Games”

11/5. Esports & Gamic Orientalism
- Goto-Jones, “Playing with Being in Digital Asia: Gamic Orientalism and the Virtual Dōjō”
- Choe and Kim, “Never Stop Playing: StarCraft and Asian Gamer Death”

11/12. The Robot’s Heart
- Katsuno, “The Robot’s Heart: Tinkering with Humanity and Intimacy in Robot-Building”
- **Project Proposal (post by midnight 11/15)**

11/19. The Augmented City
- Licoppe and Inada, “Geolocalized Technologies, Location-Aware Communities, and Personal Territories: The Magi Case”
- Roquet, “From Animation to Augmentation: Dennō Coil and the Composited Self”

11/26. Surveillance, Online Extremism, and Paths Forward
- Lee, “Interrogating ‘Digital Korea’: Mobile Phone Tracking and the Spatial Expansion of Labour Control”
- Yamaguchi, “Xenophobia in Action: Ultranationalism, Hate Speech, and the Internet in Japan”

12/3. Peer Review Session & Final Topics TBD
- No readings – **Draft Project Due (by class time)**

12/10. **Final Project Presentations & Project Revisions Posted (by class time)**