

**ENG1131:
Writing Through Media: Anime (as Modern) Epics**

ENG1131 (Section 18C3, Class 12920, FA20)

T: 4 (10:40-11:30a) / W: 9-11 (4:05-7:05p) / R: 4-5 (10:40-12:35p)

Room: T: WEIL 0408A / W: ARCH 0116 / R: WEIL 408E

Course Website: Canvas

Brandon Murakami

dmurakami@ufl.edu

OH: T/R: 5-6, TBD

TBD (and by appt.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The genre of the epic has a long history and irrevocable hold on the (Western) literary tradition as well as contemporary forms of media like tv shows, films, and even graphic novels. Featuring fantastical and grand worlds, valorous deeds, supernatural forces, extended storylines, and legendary heroes, the epic genre continues to shape the ways we tell stories today. And though we recognize contemporary, iconic franchises like *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Game of Thrones*, *Westworld*, as offshoots of the epic tradition, with the rise of anime's popularity in America, particularly within the past decade and the continued expansion of streaming services, and the longer history of transcultural exchange between the "West" and Japan, this course asks several related questions: what is an *epic anime*? what does it mean to think of anime narratives *as* epics? what about the specific medium allows anime to tap into elements of the epic tradition in more modern ways than other mediums?

We will watch both iconic and highly popular anime series to answer this question as well as how the specific medium of anime, as a culturally distinctive yet widely circulated medium, taps into contemporary global themes that resonate with its audiences—intended and unintended. We will also the generic expectations of shōnen or seinen confirm, resist, or adapt "Western" conventions to reimagine the epic in a contemporary form of storytelling. With a particular emphasis on series animated within the last 30 years, this course will give students a working knowledge of the field of anime studies as well as insights into Japanese culture and history while also developing their skills in composition and academic research.

This course confers C credit.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the semester students will be able to:

- Have a firm grasp of Japanese history, particularly from the 20th century to present
- Have a working knowledge of the history and evolution of anime and its genres and related mediums in the "media mix"
- Be able to perform in-depth and critical analyses of animated texts
- Become familiar in a variety of theoretical approaches and lenses
- Practice a range of genre-based writing (scholarly, public-facing, reviews, etc.)
- Become more knowledgeable about media studies methodologies and their applications, broadly speaking
- Strengthen their research and critical thinking skills, particularly in a field/topic that is of growing interest in American popular culture
- Understand the dynamics of transcultural/transnational flows, particularly with the advent of the internet
- Have a working knowledge of fandom studies and related disciplines

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (i.e. grammar, punctuation, usage) and the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive, require multiple drafts submitted to the instructor for feedback prior to final submission, and fulfill 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement. Course content must include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students are expected learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.

Please note: these General Education Objectives for Composition (C) were developed for an academic print culture. This course will exceed these objectives by introducing theoretical and pragmatic objectives that acknowledge changes from literacy to digital literacy (electracy) that affect how writers write, how readers read, and how information moves. Such concepts will include address of mobility, scalability, circulation, visual rhetoric and visual literacies, and access.

The official General Education Objectives and the additional digital literacy objectives will be met throughout this course by way the project assignments and course materials. Each of the writing assignments requires careful attention to distinctions between format, style, and method. Each assignment will require students to adapt their writing to specific, situational purposes and contexts.

In each assignment, students will be required not only to employ skills in organizing their writing, articulating their theses, supporting their claims with strong evidence, and displaying proficiency in analyzing their writing and others' writing for errors in logic, but they will also be required to be able to explain their reasons form making those choices in their writing. That is, students will learn *not only how to write*, but to explain *why they write as they do*. To this end, students will be asked not only to display these skills in their written work, but to articulate their understanding of why they make the written/rhetorical choices they do in order to better understand their own writing processes and successful writing practices.

IMPORTANT: The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

IMPORTANT: A **minimum** grade of C (73%) is required for General Education credit.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

None (All texts have been made accessible by the Instructor on the Course Canvas)

COURSE POLICIES

1. You must complete ***all assignments*** to receive credit for this course. You should also complete all viewings/readings and come to each class prepared to discuss in-depth and at-length.
2. *Attendance:* Attendance in this class is mandatory. You are permitted three (3) unexcused absences without penalty. Two (2) tardies (more than 5 minutes late) counts as one (1) absence. However:
 - Missing more than two (2) screening periods will result in **automatic failure** of the course because there is a discussion section attached which is related to that day's screening. As another note, you should not have anything else scheduled during the screening period (club activities, another class, volunteer/service activities) as you are **registered** for the screening period.
 - Six (6) absences or more will result in **automatic failure** of the course. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events (such as athletics and band) and religious holidays are exempt from this policy with documentation. I will consider documented extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
 - Absences will be excused in accordance with UF policy, including for illness, religious holidays, military obligation, or university-sponsored events. Absences related to university-sponsored events and holidays must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. If absent due to a scheduled event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.
 - For further information on university attendance policy, please see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies>
3. *Paper Format & Submission:* Papers should be submitted with standard, 1-inch margins, double spacing, and 12-point Times New Roman font. All papers will be submitted electronically, via Canvas.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments:* There are *absolutely no* late paper submissions. If you need an extension for an appropriate reason, come talk to me **in advance** of the due date.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course (save things on a cloud server in case of severe computer issues). Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code>
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. *Grade Appeals.* In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant by email given the current situation for UF Staff (cblount@ufl.edu). Grade appeals **may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.**
10. *Course Evaluations.* Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
12. *Classroom Behavior and Netiquette:* You'll need your laptops in class on occasion, though I'll let you know which days you'll be needing them so that you can prepare in advance. What you get out of this class will directly result from the energy you put into it in the classroom, so please use the time in the classroom wisely. I will not tolerate any rude, coarse, or offensive remarks based upon race, gender, ability, or sexual identity in written assignments or class discussion. In addition, please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the texts we discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly, being marked "absent" from the class.
13. *UF's policy on Harassment:* UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation – 30% (300 points)

There are four parts to your Participation grade, detailed below:

Midsemester (50 points)

- You will receive a grade based on your performance during class discussions, any responses made to peers' discussion posts on Canvas, **and** any homework assigned. The period for the Midsemester Participation is roughly Weeks 1-8. There will also be a self-assessment which will allow you to reflect on your own participation performance and identify your strengths and opportunities for the second half of the semester.

Endsemester (50 points)

- You will receive a grade based on your performance during class discussions, any responses made to peers' discussion posts on Canvas, **and** any homework assigned. The period for the Midsemester Participation is roughly Weeks 9-16. There will also be a self-assessment which will allow you to reflect on your own participation performance and identify your strengths and opportunities for your future classes here at UF.

Presentation (100 points)

- For one class you will prepare a **short** (no more than 2-3 minutes) presentation that examines that work we are watching through a specific topic, issue, theme, or analytical lens. You may opt to incorporate research into your presentation, but the purpose of this presentation is to provide us with insight with which to further consider the series in new and interesting ways. (In other words, you shouldn't present on "water is wet" observations *unless* your presentation adds **nuance** to how we think about the topic/issue/theme/etc.)

Discussion Leader (100 points)

- For one class you will lead discussion with another classmate on a Thursday block. To do this, you will work with said classmate to read through *everyone's* discussion posts and bring two or three (2-3) topics that seem the most salient to address as a class. These should not be facile subjects (like what's going on in the plot?), but they should be topics which you deem worthy of deeper/further discussion. More details/guidelines will be provided after our first class meeting.

Discussion Posts – 15% (150 points) / 1500 words

Over the course of the semester you will write ten (10) discussion posts based on the viewings we have covered so far. These will be due on Wednesdays **before** the starting of our screening periods. This is to allow your classmates who are the Discussion Leaders for Thursday (see above) enough time to read and collate topics for that day's discussion.

The responses you write must adhere to **two (2)** in order to receive credit: 1) you must write a **minimum** of 150 words for **each** post; and 2) your post should address some idea, theme, topic that you find interesting/intriguing and want to explore during Thursday's class at greater length. In other words, your posts should not be about superficial things (like plot or character names) unless it is related to your novel understanding of something about the series.

Public Scholarship Projects – 30% (300 points) / 3000 words

This category of assignments allows you to explore a genre of writing that is public facing and asks you to place yourselves in the role of the “public academic”. You will complete three (3) of these projects (essentially, mini-papers) with the intent to send them to publication somewhere.

Each should be 1,000 words and incorporate some degree of research but it should also balance the delivery of this research with writing that is accessible to a wide audience who may be unfamiliar with the series/topic(s) at hand. You will also be addressing series that **we will not be covering in this class as well as series that have been released or is currently on-going within the past 5 years**. You will need to get approval from me on the series that you choose (example: writing on a longer series like *One Piece* is not really feasible because of its length).

Finally, you must complete at least **two** (2) different kinds of projects—that is, you may opt to do two Series Reviews for two *different* series; or, two different Series Contextualizations for the *same* series (for example: one looking at a social crisis that inspired the series and the other looking at contemporary Japan’s gender politics and how this plays into the narrative’s representation of gender). More details and examples will be provided early on in the semester. The three different kinds of projects are as follows:

Series Review

- Essentially, you will provide an *unbiased* review of the series of your choice (with the above-limitations in place). The purpose of this project is to give the reader a sense of the larger themes/issues of the series under review including aspects that a viewer should consider before watching (content warnings, brief historical/cultural context, etc.) **as well as** your own assessment of how “good” the series is both on its own feet as well as in comparison to similar titles in the genre.

Series Contextualization

- In this project you will address a series (within the limitations noted above) and write a short piece that gives the (perhaps ignorant) audience greater insight into some aspect of your series of choice. This could be giving your reader a better understanding of the social, political, economic, historical, or cultural context that you believe is significant to understanding the series. As this kind of project relies on analyzing the series beyond its status as a standalone text (that is, you are addressing the series as a text produced out of a specific constellation of contexts and a specific temporal moment), you will have to do some research to better inform your audience about whatever context you are pointing out.

Topic/Trend in Series or Genre

- This considers a certain topic or trend across a series or the genre more broadly and relies heavily on your own history with anime. Although this need not include research you should be able to address the topic/trend you are pointing out with a measure of authority (that is, being able to cite specific episodes of different anime specifically and accurately) in order to make a convincing piece of writing that showcases your ability to think “big picture”. You should also hypothesize *why* you think this topic/trend in a series or the genre is prevalent (what factors do you think have influenced this?) though you need not explicitly answer your hypothesis. Rather, think of this project as a call to others to think and address what you have pointed out in greater depth.

Critical Analysis Paper – 25% (250 Points) / 1500 words

This assignment is your “traditional” research paper that asks you to put forth an insightful argument of your choice that is sufficiently supported with evidence and detailed, nuanced analysis of a series/title that we have watched **in class**. You will also identify **one** (1) critical approach or theoretical lens that you are “reading” with as well as incorporate the scholarship of others throughout your paper in order to join the “conversation”.

Finally, you will be making ample use of your close reading skills to provide provocative and compelling insights that serve to uphold your argument. More details about the paper will be provided early in the semester though you can refer to the Assignment Assessment Rubric (further below) to get a general sense of sufficient work. There are three parts you must turn in to receive credit as noted below:

Outline (25 points)

- You will provide an outline of your paper that includes a working thesis statement as well as your paragraph topics and potential close readings and research which you will bring to a peer review for consideration before you begin drafting. Not having an acceptable outline ready by the peer review date will result in a zero (0) for this portion of the assignment.

Draft (75 points)

- You will complete a **full** rough draft that you will then bring to peer review to workshop and address any significant issues in your paper before you use the feedback for revisions for your final draft. Significant issues to address may include: lacking a thesis, lacking sufficient evidence, lack of focus, lack of insight, failure to close read, lacking scholarship, a shallow/obvious argument, etc. Do not expect your peer to completely “fix” your paper for you. Not having a draft ready by the peer review date will result in a zero (0) for this portion of the assignment.

Paper (150 points)

- This is the final version of your research paper that, as noted in the description above, incorporates all aspects of the “traditional” scholarly humanities-style paper. There is not much to add here other than we will go into greater depth on how to effectively and efficiently write a research paper as well as examine student samples from a previous semester to give you a more concrete understanding of expectations.

GRADING SCHEME

Assignment	Points	Words
Participation		
<i>Midsemester</i>	50	N/A
<i>Endsemester</i>	50	N/A
<i>Presentation</i>	100	N/A
<i>Discussion Leader</i>	100	N/A
Participation Total	300	N/A
Discussion Posts		
<i>Response 1</i>	15	150
<i>Response 2</i>	15	150
<i>Response 3</i>	15	150
<i>Response 4</i>	15	150
<i>Response 5</i>	15	150
<i>Response 6</i>	15	150
<i>Response 7</i>	15	150
<i>Response 8</i>	15	150
<i>Response 9</i>	15	150
<i>Response 10</i>	15	150
Discussion Posts Total	150	1,500
Public Scholarship Projects		
<i>Project #1</i>	100	1,000
<i>Project #2</i>	100	1,000
<i>Project #3</i>	100	1,000
Projects Total	300	3,000
Critical Analysis Paper		
<i>Outline</i>	25	N/A
<i>Draft</i>	75	N/A
<i>Final Draft</i>	150	1,500
Paper Total	250	1,500
Assignments Total	1,000	6,000

GRADING SCALE

A	4.0	930+	B	3.0	830-869	C	2.0	730-769	D	1.0	630-669
A-	3.67	900-929	B-	2.67	800-829	C-	1.67	700-729	D-	0.67	600-629
B+	3.33	870-899	C+	2.33	770-799	D+	1.33	670-699	E	0.00	0-599

IMPORTANT: Course grades have two components. To receive Composition (C) requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C (73%) or higher. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/student-responsibilities/writing-requirement>

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student’s written assignments with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support, style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. Conferring credit for the University Writing Requirement, this course requires that papers conform to the following assessment rubric. More specific rubrics and guidelines applicable to the individual assignment may be delivered throughout the semester. View this rubric as a guide for expectations—papers are graded holistically.

	A	B	C	D
Thesis and Argumentation	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly and effectively uses sources.	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument’s logic.	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak or ill-thought out, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Thesis is vague and/or confused, demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not utilize any source material. <i>Failure to provide a thesis will result in a 0 paper.</i>
Use of Texts/Sources	Primary and secondary texts are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Primary and secondary texts are incorporated and utilized but not contextualized as neatly or as significantly.	Primary and secondary texts are mostly incorporated and utilized but are not properly contextualized (“quote dropping”).	Primary and secondary texts are absent. <i>Failure to use the primary text/sources will result in a 0 paper.</i>
Style and Tone	Proper academic style and tone is maintained at all times. No second person, slang, colloquialisms, or idioms are used.	Proper academic style and tone is maintained for the majority of the paper with a few instances where the writer slips up.	Academic style and tone are present but there are large instances of informal writing throughout.	Mostly informal thorough out.
Grammar and Mechanics	No errors.	A few errors.	Some errors.	Many errors. <i>More than 10 errors on a single page will result in a 0 paper.</i>

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (8/23-8/27): The Epic Genre and the Epic Throughout History/The History of Anime

8/24 – Introductions/Syllabus

8/25 – [Screening Lecture]: Course Context (The Epic Form and Anime as Modern Epic);
Gloss Histories: (Japan, Anime, Genres, Themes) ; Introductions (Cont.)

8/26 – Napier, “Why Anime” ; Napier, “Orientalism, (Soft) Power, and Pleasure” (excerpts)

Week 2 (8/30-9/3): The Birth of “Modern” and “Global” Anime Film / Close Reading and Analysis

8/31 – Discussion: *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1984)

9/1 – [Screening/Discussion]: *Princess Mononoke* (1997)

9/2 – Close Reading Demonstration

Week 3 (9/6-9/10) Contemporary Anime Film / Close Reading and Analysis Practice

9/7 – *Your Name* (2016)

9/8 – [Screening/Discussion/Workshop] Thelen, “Disaster and Salvation in the Japanese Periphery” ;
Close Reading Groups/Individual Practice

9/9 – Introduction to Shōnen Themes/History

Week 4 (9/13-9/17) Intro to Shōnen Genre: Youth, Futurity, and Its Limits

9/14 – *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (PMMM, 2011) Ep. 1-5

9/15 – [Screening/Discussion] *PMMM* (2011) Ep. 6-8 and James, “Magical Girl Martyrs”

9/16 – *PMMM* (2011) Ep. 9-10

Week 5 (9/20-9/24) Shōnen and Seinen: Maturity, the Surreal, and the Supernatural

9/21 – Kovacic, “The Many Faces of Popular Culture...: Questioning Identity, Humanity and Culture...” and
Fullmetal Alchemist (FMA, 2003-2004), E1-4

9/22 – [Screening/Discussion] *FMA* (2003-2004), E5-8

9/23 – *FMA* (2003-2004), E9, 13

Week 6 (9/27-10/1) Seinen: Coming of Age and Harsh Realism

9/28 – *FMA* (2003-2004), E14-17

9/29 – [Screening/Discussion] *FMA* (2003-2004), E18-21

9/30 – *FMA* (2003-2004), E22-23

Week 7 (10/4-10/8) Nationalism, War, and the Posthuman Body

10/5 – *FMA* (2003-2004), E24-25 and Sadler, “Disability and Biopolitics in Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood”

10/6 – [Screening/Discussion] *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* (FMA:B, 2009-2010), E11-13

10/7 – Ashbaugh, “Antimodernism as the Rhetoric of Steampunk Anime”

Week 8 (10/11-10/15) Modernity and “Truth”

10/12 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E22-26

10/11 – [Screening/Discussion] *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E2, 27-29

10/14 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E30-31

Week 9 (10/18-10/22) Colonialism and Settler Colonialism

10/19 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E32-35

10/20 – [Screening/Discussion] *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E36-39

10/21 – Wright, “The Value of Amestris: Imperialism in Fullmetal Alchemist”

Week 10 (10/25-10/29) Alternate Histories, Alternate Futures

10/26 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E40-43

10/27 – [Screening/Discussion] *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E44-E47

10/28 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E48-49

Week 11 (11/1-11/5) Comparative Settler Colonialisms; Comparative Imperialisms

11/2 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E50-53

11/3 – [Screening/Discussion] *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E54-57

11/4 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E58-59

Week 12 (11/8-11/12) Masculinity and the Nation

11/9 – *FMA:B* (2009-2010), E60-64

11/10 – [Discussion] Wrap-up: *Fullmetal Brotherhood* and Intro: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Hokkaido/Ainu History

11/11 – NO CLASS (Veterans’ Day)

Week 13 (11/15-11/19) The Individual and Society

11/16 – *Golden Kamuy* (GK, 2018-2020), E1-3

11/17 – [Screening/Discussion] GK (2018-2020), E4-7

11/18 – GK (2018-2020), E8-10

Week 14 (11/22-11/26) Shōjo, Empire, and Gender(ed) Power I

11/23 – *Golden Kamuy* (2018-2020), E10-12

11/24 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

11/25 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Week 15 (11/29-12/3) Shōjo, Empire and Gender(ed) Power II

11/30 – GK (2018-2020), E13-16

12/1 – [Screening/Discussion] GK (2018-2020), E17-20

12/2 – Napier, “The Fifth Look” ; Ito, “Golden Kamuy: Can the Popular Manga Contribute to Anime Studies?”

Week 16 (12/6-12/8) Old and New Feminisms

12/7 – GK (2018-2020), E21-24

12/8 – LAST DAY OF CLASS

IMPORTANT: I reserve the right to adjust the schedule/assignments as needed to accommodate course goals and to better meet student needs.