

ENGL 2091/4391—Special Topics in the Literatures of Diversity:
When Yokai Attack: Monster, Spirits & Fantastical Creatures
In Japanese Folklore & Culture
UNO Summer Study Abroad in Kyoto, Japan, May-June 2024
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Course Description: This course will take as its subject the Japanese phenomenon known as the *yokai*, a word loosely translated as “monster,” but that also has meanings closer to “spirit” or “ghost” or “fantastical creature.” *Yokai* began their lives as localized, rural phenomenon associated with stories we would classify as folklore, but after centuries as the subjects of folklore and oral tradition, the *yokai* began to be documented by writers in urban areas, a move that normally fixes the depiction and meaning of folkloric creatures. However, in the case of the *yokai*, they evolved and adapted to their new urban settings, acquiring new behaviors and characteristics commensurate with their new locales. New *yokai* continue to materialize, even into the twenty-first century. This course will investigate *yokai* and their evolution as markers of Japanese culture through literature.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course, students will be able to: 1-identify specific *yokai* and analyze their functions in Japanese culture in both historical and modern settings; 2-demonstrate an understanding of the ways that *yokai* meanings adapt to changes in Japan’s society over time; 3-through independent field research in Kyoto, identify, analyze, and present to the class a contemporary *yokai* found in popular culture, with an explanation of its social function.

Course Requirements, 2091: The student will be required to post to two online fora during the first online week of the class and to submit three short (~2 pp.) essays; one longer (~4 pp.) essay; a presentation on a self-selected and field-researched *yokai* from contemporary Japanese popular culture; and a final exam. Students must submit all assignments in order to pass the class. **IMPORTANT: ALL MATERIAL SUBMITTED TO THE INSTRUCTOR FOR CREDIT MUST BE THE STUDENT’S OWN ORIGINAL WORK.** All essays will be subjected to both plagiarism and AI scans, and student work found to have been plagiarized or written—in whole OR in part—by AI (e.g., ChatGPT or any other AI content generator) will receive a grade of zero with no opportunity for a “do-over.” Since students must complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the class, any commission of academic dishonesty will result in a final grade of F for the class. Should plagiarism or AI generation be detected in student work, the instructor will submit a report of academic dishonesty to UNO’s Office of Judicial & Student Assistance upon return to the United States. Assuming the student completes all required assignments, the final grade will be determined according to the following percentages:

Class Participation (including forum posts):	20%
Short essay 1 (due 5/24 by 11:59 p.m.):	10%
Short essay 2 (due 6/1 by 11:59 p.m.):	10%
Short essay 3 (due 6/6 by 11:59 p.m.):	10%
Long essay (due 6/21 by 11:59 p.m.):	20%
Class presentation (6/26-6/27):	10%
Final exam (written in class, 6/28):	20%

Course Requirements, 4391: The student will be required to post to two online fora during the first online week of the class and to submit three short (~2-3 pp.) essays; one longer (~6 pp.) essay; a presentation on a self-selected and field-researched yokai from contemporary Japanese popular culture; and a final exam. Students must submit all assignments in order to pass the class. Students taking the course at the 4000-level will also each be assigned a scholarly article about a yokai that they will then present to the class; this will constitute a significant portion of the class participation grade. **IMPORTANT: ALL MATERIAL SUBMITTED TO THE INSTRUCTOR FOR CREDIT MUST BE THE STUDENT’S OWN ORIGINAL WORK.** All essays will be subjected to both plagiarism and AI scans, and student work found to have been plagiarized or written—in whole OR in part—by AI (e.g., ChatGPT or any other AI content generator) will receive a grade of zero with no opportunity for a “do-over.” Since students must complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the class, any commission of academic dishonesty will result in a final grade of F for the class. Should plagiarism or AI generation be detected in student work, the instructor will submit a report of academic dishonesty to UNO’s Office of Judicial & Student Assistance upon return to the United States. Assuming the student completes all required assignments, the final grade will be determined according to the following percentages:

Class Participation (including forum posts & article presentation):	20%
Short essay 1 (due 5/24 by 11:59 p.m.):	10%
Short essay 2 (due 6/1 by 11:59 p.m.):	10%
Short essay 3 (due 6/6 by 11:59 p.m.):	10%
Long essay (due 6/21 by 11:59 p.m.):	20%
Class presentation (6/26-6/27):	10%
Final exam (written in class, 6/28):	20%

Criteria for Assignments: All written material produced by the student and submitted as part of an assignment should be composed in standard written English (it’s a thing, and you can look it up), which includes correct grammar, mechanics, and spelling and an appropriate voice (i.e., not casual or employing slang terms). This includes forum posts, which may be more casual than formal papers but should still use correct grammar and spelling and a respectful tone.

Forum Posts: Because we begin classes online a week before we arrive in Kyoto, class discussion will take the form of forum posts. Participation in TWO fora will be required, and students must post TWICE to each forum. Instructions as regards each forum can be found below in the daily schedule. Fora will appear in the class Canvas page.

Essays: Essays are due on the day indicated on the syllabus schedule and on the assignment itself. Essays will be submitted via Turnitin on the class Canvas page, which is also where the instructor will comment on and grade essays. Keep in mind that in order to make an argument about literature, students must QUOTE and ANALYZE text from our assigned readings, and these quotations MUST come from the texts required for class. Essays that quote from other versions of our texts will not pass. Essay grades are FINAL, but the instructor will read and respond to drafts leading up to the final version of the essay. For the first short essay, due on May 24, paper consultation will have to take place via email, and the student must get the draft to the instructor by May 22. Once we are on the ground in Kyoto, the instructor will read essay drafts ONLY in person, by appointment. Students should speak with or email the instructor to set up

an appointment at a time convenient to both parties. Essays should be typed, double-spaced in 12-point font (Times New Roman, Calibri or Arial preferred) with one-inch margins. The first page of the essay should include the student's name, the course name and number, the date, and an appropriate essay title.

Academic Honesty: As mentioned above in "Course Requirements," academic dishonesty is grounds for failure or worse and should be avoided at all costs. Students should familiarize themselves with the UNO Student Code of Conduct, <https://www.uno.edu/media/17427>, which explains academic misconduct and the procedures the university employs for addressing violations thereof.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory; students are expected to be in class every day of this very short summer semester. The only viable excuse for missing class is illness, and should a student be sick enough to miss class, the student is expected to report this illness to the program director, Ms. Jennifer Torres; the academic director, Dr. Noriko Ito Krenn; and the instructor.

Student Hours: Our situation in Kyoto is not conducive to the instructor having regular office hours during which students can simply stop by; therefore, students should email or speak with the instructor after class to set up a time convenient to both instructor and student. Likely, after lunch on class days will be the most convenient for me, but if a student is taking the afternoon Japanese language class, this will not work. The best thing is to speak with the instructor and come to a mutually convenient time and place to meet, but please bear in mind that for brief questions or discussions, I am pretty much available to talk whenever you happen to see me—during lunch, walking to class, while on field trips. Just ask if it is convenient for me to talk, and I promise I will either address your concerns/questions or let you know what time would be better for me.

Disability Services: University policy provides, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. As one might imagine, for a study abroad program, it is important that students who are eligible for disability services communicate their needs to their instructors and program directors as soon as possible so that accommodations may be arranged well ahead of our arrival in Kyoto. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services, Earl K. Long Library, Room 126E (504-280-7284 or atatc@uno.edu) to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

Classroom Behavior: Students are expected to behave courteously to each other and to the instructor at all times. All electronic devices—cell phones, Ipods, handheld video games, et cetera—should be turned off and put away for the duration of the class; the sole exception to this rule is the use of laptop computers for the purpose of taking notes or consulting the text in electronic form **only**. Texting, playing video games, listening to music, checking email, posting to Instagram, and surfing the net not only prevent students from devoting their full attention to lecture and discussion but are also **profoundly rude behaviors that are a direct and personal insult to the instructor and to other students**. If the instructor detects a student texting, playing video games, or otherwise using technology for any unauthorized purpose during class, the instructor will deduct 2 points from the student's *final grade* for each infraction. In addition, the instructor does **not** give permission to have her classes videoed in any way, including with camera phones. The instructor will consent to voice recordings of discussion and

lecture provided the student has asked for and received individual permission to do so. These provisions should not be taken lightly as an entire legal category, intellectual property law, is devoted to this sort of thing, and violation of the instructor's intellectual property rights is an actionable offense.

Required Texts to be Purchased: Note that these texts are REQUIRED and should be purchased and downloaded BEFORE students leave the United States. I suggest that students purchase the Kindle versions of the books, as I imagine most students would prefer not to haul physical copies through multiple time zones. However, if a student prefers a physical copy, they do indeed exist for the first three texts listed and can be found on Amazon under the same titles and authors. Be advised that the four books listed below are the only texts required for purchase; all other required readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas.

Toriyama Sekien (author), Hiroko Yoda (editor), and Matt Alt (translator). *Japandemonium Illustrated: The Yokai Encyclopedias of Toriyama Sekien*. Dover Publications, 2017. ISBN 978-0486800356; link to Amazon Kindle edition (\$19.22):

https://www.amazon.com/Japandemonium-Illustrated-Encyclopedias-Toriyama-Sekien-ebook/dp/B01N4P852S/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1704063109&sr=1-1

Adam Kabat (translator). *The River Imp and the Stinky Jewel and Other Tales: Monster Comics from Edo Japan*. Columbia UP, 2023. ISBN 978-0231209731; link to Amazon Kindle edition (\$14.99):

https://www.amazon.com/River-Stinky-Jewel-Other-Tales-ebook/dp/B0BJ7RQ5B2/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1704063762&sr=1-1

Lafcadio Hearn. *Kwaidan: Ghost Stories and Strange Tales of Old Japan*. Dover Publications, 2012. ISBN 978-0486450940. Link to Amazon Kindle edition (\$2.95):

https://www.amazon.com/Kwaidan-Ghost-Stories-Strange-Literature-ebook/dp/B00A0AFS3Y/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1704066881&sr=1-5

Iwaya Sazanami (author) and Hannah Riddell (translator). *Momotaro: The Story of Peach-Boy—Iwaya's Fairy Tales of Old Japan*. National Diet Library of Japan, 1903. ASIN B07V8LYDGZ; link to Amazon Kindle edition (\$2.99):

https://www.amazon.com/MOMOTARO-Story-Peach-Boy-Japanese-English-translation-ebook/dp/B07V8LYDGZ/ref=sr_1_4?crid=28CM208L47WM1&keywords=momotaro+Riddell&qid=1704064527&s=books&srefix=momotaro+riddell%2Cstripbooks%2C94&sr=1-4

Daily Schedule

Week One (online), May 19-25

Monday, May 20: Read introductory PPT and class syllabus; first forum (each student must post twice). **First post** (200 words minimum): introduce yourself to the class, in as much detail as you like (e.g., your major, where you're from, that sort of thing) and tell why you've chosen the Japan study abroad program and what you hope to get out of it. Also, explain why you choose this class and what about the study of yokai appeals to you. Feel free to share any questions you may have about the subject and/or tell us what you hope to learn in the class. **Second post**

(200 word minimum): respond to a peer's post in some way. If you have similar interests or concerns, tell them; if you know the answer to any question your peer posed, feel free to answer it. In short, I want you to engage with each other in a conversational way so that we will know each other at least a little bit before we meet in Kyoto. I will also be commenting on students' posts, and you are welcome to respond to my comments as well. Feel free to post more than twice if you like; in fact, I would appreciate a more detailed conversation.

Tuesday, May 21: reading assignment, "What Is Yokai Culture?" from *An Introduction to Yokai Culture: Monsters, Ghosts, and Outsiders in Japanese History* by Komatsu Kazuhiko and PPT on the most common yokai.

Wednesday, May 22: Reading assignment from Keisuke Nishimoto's *Strange Tales from Japan: "Kappas"; "The Priest that was Eaten by a Dog"; "The Fox Barber"; and "The Cat Monster Mansion."* Second forum (each student must post twice, 200 words minimum for each post): what sorts of commonalities do you see running through these stories? What do you think these commonalities indicate about the culture that produced and consumed these stories? Your second post should respond to a peer's post. Again, try to conduct a conversation about the stories and their meanings.

Thursday, May 23: First short essay assignment due via Turnitin on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. Details of the essay assignment will be posted on Canvas but will basically involve a close reading and analysis of one of the stories from *Strange Tales from Japan*.

Week Two, May 26-June 1 Students should come to class have already read and prepared to discuss the texts assigned for that day.

Sunday, May 26: Students arrive in Kyoto.

Monday, May 27: Check-in to dorm, campus & city tour.

Tuesday, May 28: First day of on-site class. "Yamata-no-orochi" (The Eight-headed Serpent) told in English by B.H. Chamberlain, and "How the Demon at Agi Bridge in Omi Province Ate Somebody" from *Konjaku monogatari shu* (circa 1120 A.D.).

Wednesday, May 29: Chapters 16 & 27 from *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection* by Marian Ury, University of Michigan Press, 1979.

Thursday, May 30: The monsters of the *Heike* (excerpts).

Friday, May 31: Kyoto field trip.

Saturday, June 1: Second short essay assignment due via Turnitin on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. Details of the essay assignment will be posted on Canvas but will involve a comparative analysis between a story we have read thus far and a self-selected Western fairy tale.

Week Three, June 3-8

Monday, June 3: "Shuten Doji" in Noriko Reider's "Shuten Doji: 'Drunken Demon,'" *Asian Folklore Studies* vol. 64, no. 2, 2005, pp. 207-231. Students are only responsible for reading pages 212-228 but would benefit from reading the entire article. "A Tale of an Earth Spider" in Noriko Reider's "Tsuchigumo soshi: The Emergence of a Shape-Shifting Killer Female Spider," *Asian Ethnology* vol. 72, no. 1, 2013, pp. 55-83. Students are only responsible for reading pages 69-75 but would benefit from reading the entire article.

Tuesday, June 4: Create your own yokai and present it to the class. Complete details of the assignment will be posted on Canvas, but this will involve constructing a yokai, describing its appearance and powers, and explaining how it speaks to social/psychological fears, pressures or challenges. Visual aids (drawings) are welcome but not necessary to fulfill the assignment.

Wednesday, June 5: Sekien, *Japandemonium*, "Introduction," "The Illustrated Demon Horde's Night Parade," and "The Illustrated Demon Horde from Past and Present."

Thursday, June 6: Sekien, *Japandemonium*, "More of the Demon Horde from Past and Present" and "A Horde of Haunted Housewares." Third short essay, a description of and justification for your invented yokai, due at 11:59 p.m. via Turnitin on Canvas.

Week Four, June 10-14

Monday, June 10: Chapter One, "A Monster Catalogue" from *The River Imp and the Stinky Jewel and Other Tales: Monster Comics from Edo Japan*, translated by Adam Kabat. [It is recommended, but not required, that students read the introduction to the book as well.]

Tuesday, June 11: Chapter Two, "Monsters to the Rescue" from *The River Imp and the Stinky Jewel and Other Tales: Monster Comics from Edo Japan*, translated by Adam Kabat.

Wednesday, June 12: Chapter Three, "The Monster Takes a Bride" from *The River Imp and the Stinky Jewel and Other Tales: Monster Comics from Edo Japan*, translated by Adam Kabat.

Thursday, June 13: Chapter Four, "The River Imp and the Stinky Jewel" from *The River Imp and the Stinky Jewel and Other Tales: Monster Comics from Edo Japan*, translated by Adam Kabat.

Friday, June 14: Osaka field trip.

Week Five, June 17-21

Monday, June 17: "Kwaidan," "Oshidori," "The Story of O-tei," "Ubazakura," "Diplomacy," and "Of a Mirror and a Bell" by Lafcadio Hearn, from *Kwaidan: Ghost Stories and Strange Tales of Old Japan*.

Tuesday, June 18: "Jikininki," "Mujina," "Rokuro-Kubi," "A Dead Secret," "Yuki-Onna," and "The Story of Aoyagi" by Lafcadio Hearn, from *Kwaidan: Ghost Stories and Strange Tales of Old Japan*.

Wednesday, June 19: "Jiu-roku-zakura," "The Dream of Akinosuke," "Riki-baka," "Hi-mawari," and "Hrai" by Lafcadio Hearn, from *Kwaidan: Ghost Stories and Strange Tales of Old Japan*.

Thursday, June 20: *Momotaro: The Story of Peach-Boy—Iwaya's Fairy Tales of Old Japan* by Iwaya Sazanami (author) and Hannah Riddell (translator). Discussion of Peach Boy as WW2 propaganda.

Friday, June 21: Longer essay (number four) due by 11:59 p.m. via Turnitin on Canvas.

Week Six, June 24-29

Monday, June 24: Yokai and Covid: Claudia Merli, "A Chimeric Being from Kyushu, Japan: Amabie's Revival during Covid-19," *Anthropology Today* vol. 36, no. 5, October 2020, pp. 6-10; Sam George, "Amabie goes viral: the monstrous mercreature returns to battle the Gothic Covid-19," *Critical Quarterly* vol. 62, no. 4, Dec. 2020, pp. 32-40; and Antonija Cavcic, "Spendemic: Japan's Marketing of the Mythical Creatures and the Business of Selling Hope," *IAFOR: Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 7, no. 1, 2022, pp. 65-76.

Tuesday, June 25: Class presentations of individual yokai research projects; details on Canvas.

Wednesday, June 26: Class presentations of individual yokai research projects; details on Canvas. Class presentations of individual yokai research projects; details on Canvas.

Thursday, June 27: Class presentations of individual yokai research projects; details on Canvas.

Friday, June 28: Final exam.