

Module Title: Yakuza: Exploring the Japanese Gangster Film

Module Code: FLM6206

Credit Value: 15

Level: 6

Pre-requisite modules:

Content Description

This module examines the Japanese yakuza-eiga (gangster film) in terms of its narrative form and ideological functions, including socio-political commentary on Japanese society from the 1930s to the present day. We will look at the work of such filmmakers as Ozu, Kurosawa, Suzuki, Fukasaku, Kitano and Miike to explore a range of issues, including the post-war occupation and 'democratisation' of Japan, its rapid industrialisation and the 'economic miracle', the mass migration from rural to urban areas and its social consequences, and the disengagement of large sections of society from the political, bureaucratic and business elite which runs the country. Students will also discuss such concepts as 'giri' (duty), 'ninjo' (honour) and 'jingi' (code) as facets of both the yakuza and national myth, and explore the themes of loyalty, betrayal and sacrifice, and the clash of traditional values with modernity. Finally, the module will consider the relationship between the Japanese and Hollywood gangster traditions through an examination of hybrid films which comment on the clash of codes and cultures.

Module Aims

The primary learning outcome in this module is that you will think about learning as a mindset and a process - it has no end point.

- By the end of the module, students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the narrative forms and ideological functions of the yakuza film.
- By the end of the module, students will be able to identify the major themes of the yakuza film, and compare these to the themes of Hollywood gangster films.
- By the end of the module, students will have refined their sense of the critical concepts of national cinema, genre and narrative theory.

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- review different ideological frameworks in order to discuss the function of socio-political commentary in the films.
- demonstrate the ability to analyse and synthesise information, and comment on complex issues regarding the form and function of yakuza films in an informed and coherent manner in both written work and seminar discussions.
- Pursue independent learning with minimal guidance, using a full range of resources.

