

Japanese Media and Television Drama

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Outline

Japan is one of the most avid television-watching nations in the world - with television sets being on throughout the day and people even watching it on their phones, it can be called one of the most important media within Japan. It penetrates all aspects of Japanese life and is located deeply within Japanese culture and society, becoming key to a profound understanding of Japan. At the same time, Japan is often criticised for having a very controlled media environment, exemplified by a formal warning to the Japanese government by the UN representative for Freedom of Press in May 2017. Nonetheless, the Japanese broadcasting landscape is extremely vibrant on the one hand and extremely closed, marred by (self-) censorship on the other. Therefore, Japanese television provides an excellent case study that highlights many different facets of broadcasting in the 20th and 21st centuries within a changing political landscape.

Offering insight into the Japanese broadcasting system, its key players and legal framework as well as one of the most popular genres, television drama, the sessions will show how Japanese society and television interact with one another and how (self-) censorship influences the production of content.

The sessions will be lectures, but each of them will also contain seminar elements, with students being asked to relate the content of the class to the readings. Visual material will be used where appropriate. Translations will be provided.

Session 1 – Freedom of Press as a By-product of the Occupation? (Re-)establishing Japanese Television post-1945

When Japan surrendered in 1945, and the USA became the most influential occupying power in Japan, a reorganisation of Japanese politics, society and media was seen as a necessity. Although NHK continued to broadcast, American ideas as to what constituted a 'free broadcasting landscape' (as opposed to the pre-war and wartime Japanese broadcasting system) entered the country and the Americans were formative in establishing Japanese television. It was under the auspices of the Americans that the Broadcasting Laws were written. In this session, we will look at how Japanese television was formed, whether or not 'old habits' crept back in its formation, particularly after the Occupation ended in 1952. Did the Japanese outsmart the Americans by allowing censorship back in (which the Americans had so neatly written out)?

Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, T. (2011). The Culture Industry. Enlightenment as Mass Deception. In: I. Szeman and T. Kaposy, ed., *Cultural Theory. An Anthology*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 40-59.

Lasswell, H.D. (1927). The Theory of Political Propaganda. *The American Political Science Review*, 21(3), pp. 627-631.

Session 2 – Freedom of Press under Fire: TV Asahi's Standoff against the LDP

Japan has mostly been ruled by the same party since 1955, with only very short periods in which they have not been in power. Although the party calls themselves Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, or Jimintō in Japanese), they are a very conservative party. While the Japanese Broadcasting Law demands unbiased coverage, TV Asahi (along with the newspaper that belongs to the same conglomerate) is known to be on the opposing end of the political spectrum. As a result, the LDP considers the Asahi Group as some kind of 'red rag'. Looking at various events, ranging from 1989 to the present day, we will look at how media and politics have interacted in Japan, and what this means for Freedom of Press.

Altman, K.K. (1996). Television and Political Turmoil. In S. Pharr and E. Krauss, eds. *Media and Politics in Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 165-186.

Harvey, S. (2010). Who Rules TV? States, Markets and the Public Interest. In: J. Wasko, ed. *A Companion to Television*. Companions in Cultural Studies. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 157-173.

Session 3 – Broadcasting the Unthinkable: Abe, Fukushima and Freedom of Press

The Triple Disaster (Earthquake, Tsunami, Nuclear Accident) of 11 March 2011 has become a milestone in contemporary Japanese history. Some historians even go as far as to talk about a Japan pre- and post- Fukushima. Naturally, a disaster of that scale would affect any kind of society, and in the aftermath, Japan had to adjust. However, not only were issues with discrimination of Fukushima residents more visible than before, the media also discovered that they were operating under a glass ceiling. Looking particularly at the Press Club System, we will work out how Fukushima has impacted on Freedom of Press in Japan - as the slide down in the rankings of the Annual Freedom of Press Index can be observed particularly from 2012 onwards. Has Fukushima merely opened Pandora's Box?

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McNeill, D. and McCurry, J. (2019). Reinventing the Japan Times. How Japan's oldest English-Language Newspaper Tacked Right, Updated. *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 17:7(4), [online]. Available at <https://apjif.org/-Justin-McCurry--David-McNeill/5240/article.pdf> [Accessed 9 Apr 2019].

Session 4 – Television Drama Creating National Unity?

Television drama is arguably one of the broadcasting flagships around the world. Not only do they satisfy our thirst for narratives, but also do they uphold values, identities and myths. They are not necessarily known for being radical, but can occasionally break the mould. How did Japanese television drama develop, flourish and flounder in the tightly regulated mediascape of Japan?

Harris, G. (2006). Beyond Realism? Modes of Reading in Marxist-Socialist and Post-Marcist-Socialist Television Drama Criticism. In: *Beyond Representation. Television Drama and the Politics and Aesthetics of Identity*. Manchester: Manchester UP, pp 9-33.

Thornham, S. and Purvis, T. (2005). Power and Subjectivity. In: *Television Drama. Theories and Identities*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 74-110.

Television and Media Studies: Suggested Readings

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- Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. and Willis, P., eds. (1996). *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Routledge, 3rd reprint.
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- Chun, J. M. (2006). *A Nation of 100 Million Idiots? A Socio-Cultural History of Japanese Television, 1953-1973*. London: Routledge.
- Clements, J. and Tamamuro, M. (2003). *The Dorama Encyclopedia. A Guide to Japanese TV Drama since 1953*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press.
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