

HNRS T480
Studio Ghibli's Greatest Works

Winter 2025
Tuesdays, 4-4:50pm
Papadakis, Rm 107

Instructor: Cara Fantini
Office: Bentley Hall, Second Floor, Office 265
Email: csf49@drexel.edu
Office Hours: By appointment only

Course Description: In this course we will examine a collection of movies animated and produced by Studio Ghibli, under the leadership of Hayao Miyazaki. These critically acclaimed films are known for thought provoking themes masterfully executed through hand-drawn animations. Together, we will review some of their most popular feature films, learn about the culture that inspired them, and examine the underlying themes, including environmentalism, feminism, and the value of interpersonal relationships.

Course Purpose: The purpose of this course is to encourage students to develop critical thinking skills and learn to identify the symbolism and underlying messages or themes within a piece of film or visual media. Throughout this course, students will be asked to think critically about the feature films, identify recurring themes and symbolism, and examine social issues presented in movies featured in class. By the end of the course students will be able to apply critical thinking skills to find deeper meaning in the media we consume, in addition to being able to identify and articulate the value of the messaging imbedded in these award-winning films.

Course Credit: 1 credit

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will learn to identify examples of symbolism in film and visual media.
2. Students will enhance their critical thinking skills by participating in class discussions and considering the perspectives of their peers in relation to their own ideals.
3. Students will utilize written communication skills and share their perspectives on class content through discussion board responses and peer feedback.

Honors Program Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate critical thinking with an emphasis on appreciating ambiguity in the process of developing knowledge.
2. Analyze, interpret, and synthesize information outside one's area of study to create broader, deeper, and more complex learning experiences.
3. Reflect upon coursework to develop a clearer sense of self and connect that self to broad and diverse communities.
4. Gain insight into how to there have been shaped by perspectives and conditions different from one's own.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts and Materials

No textbook, all required materials will be provided on BBLearn. If you have problems accessing materials, please inform instructor as soon as possible.

Assigned Readings & Additional Course Materials

- Akimoto, D. (2014). Laputa: Castle in the Sky in the Cold War as a symbol of nuclear technology of the lost civilization . *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, 1-10.
- Boyd, J. W., & Nishimura, T. (2004). Shinto perspectives in Miyazaki's anime film "Spirited Away". *Journal of Religion & Film*, 1-14.
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (1986). *Castle in the Sky* [Motion Picture].
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (1989). *Kiki's Delivery Service* [Motion Picture].
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (1997). *Princess Mononoke* [Motion Picture].
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2001). *Spirited Away* [Motion Picture].
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2004). *Howl's Moving Castle* [Motion Picture].
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2008). *Ponyo* [Motion Picture].
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2025). *The Boy and the Heron* [Motion Picture].
- Morgan, G. (2015). Creatures in Crisis: Apocalyptic environmental visions in Miyazaki's Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke. *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, 172-183.
- Rendell, J., & Denison, R. (2018). Introducing Studio Ghibli . *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, 5-14.
- Wu, C.-I. (2016). Hayao Miyazaki's mythic poetics: experiencing the narrative persuasions in Spirited Away, Howl's Moving Castle and Ponyo. *Animation: an interdisciplinary journal*, 189-203.

Graded Assignments and Learning Activities

In-Class Participation and Assigned Readings

- Students are expected to participate during class in group discussions or activities. In class participation makes up 50% of students' final grade.
- Participation grades are determined based on students' active participation in class discussions and demonstrated knowledge on assigned reading.
- Students can earn 5 points towards participation in each class session for a total of 50 participation points at the conclusion of the semester.

Discussion Boards

- Students will be asked to contribute to discussion board activities through individual posts and peer responses. Discussion topics will be related to at home readings, film viewings, and in class activities. Discussion board participation makes up 25% of students' final grade.
- Discussion posts must be at least 200 words and students *may* be required to respond to peers.

Initial posts are due at 11:59pm on the day before class and peer responses, if required, are due the following Sunday at 11:59pm.

- Students can earn 5 points for each discussion board for a total of 25 points at the conclusion of the semester.

Midterm Check-In

- Students are expected to respond to the midterm check-in discussion board with a short narrative detailing their thoughts on the class materials and discussions. This assignment makes up 10% of students' final grade.
- Students can earn up to 10 points for this assignment.

Final Project

- The final assignment makes up 15% of students' final grade. Details for the final project will be available on Blackboard post midterms.
- Students can earn up to 15 points for this assignment.

Extra Credit

- Extra credit is offered at the discretion of the instructor. If applicable, extra credit will be available to all students during Week 8 of the term.

Grading Matrix and Scale

Graded Activity	Points Possible	Percent of Final Grade
In-Class Participation/Readings	50	50%
Discussion Boards	25	25%
Midterm Check In	10	10%
Final Project	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

A+	98-100
A	93-97
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	0-59

COURSE SCHEDULE

Course Schedule					
Week #	Date	Class Location	Topic Area / Theme	Read Before Class	Homework Assignments
1	01/07/25	Papadakis 107	Introductions	n/a	Discussion Board 1: Personal Intros
2	01/14/25	Papadakis 107	Spirited Away	<i>Read "Introducing Studio Ghibli"</i>	
3	01/21/25	Papadakis 107	Spirited Away/ Princess Mononoke	<i>Read "Shinto perspectives in Miyazaki's anime film Spirited Away"</i>	Discussion Board 2: Reading/Film Reflection
4	01/28/25	Papadakis 107	Princess Mononoke/ Howl's Moving Castle	<i>Read "Creatures in Crisis"</i>	
5	02/04/25	Papadakis 107	Howl's Moving Castle	<i>Read "Hayao Miyazaki's mythic poetics" Parts 1 and 2</i>	Midterm Check-In
6	02/11/25	Papadakis 107	Howl's Moving Castle/ Ponyo	<i>Read "Hayao Miyazaki's mythic poetics" Part 3</i>	Discussion Board 3: Reading/Film Reflection
7	02/18/25	Papadakis 107	Ponyo/ Castle In the Sky		
8	02/25/25	Papadakis 107	Castle In the Sky/ Kiki's Delivery Service	<i>Read "Laputa: Castle in the Sky in the Cold War"</i>	Discussion Board 4: Reading/Film Reflection
9	03/04/25	Papadakis 107	Kiki's Delivery Service/ The Boy and the Heron		Discussion Board 5: Reading/Film Reflection
10	03/11/25	Papadakis 107	The Boy and the Heron	-	
Finals Week	No Class	-	-	-	Final Project due Sunday, March 16

Course Policies

Attendance and Late Arrivals Policy: This course starts on time, students are expected to be seated (or online) and prepared for class at this time. Students arriving more than 5 minutes late with no prior notice will forfeit one point off their participation grade for the day. Students may be excused from class if prior notice is given to the instructor. Students who do not provide proper notice will be penalized for missing class by receiving a zero for in-class participation on the day that was missed.

Late Work Policy: Late work will be accepted up to 48hrs after required deadline. Students who request extensions in advance may receive total point value for assignment. Students who do not request a formal extension will lose two points off the assignment for each day that it is late. Late work will not be accepted after 48hrs.

Email Communication: Please expect a 24 -48hr turn around for all email messages. Emails sent after 6pm will not be read until the next day. Please do not send double messages, responses to all inquiries will be delivered within a timely fashion.

Blackboard Learn (BBL): BBL will be used on a weekly basis to communicate assignments and post announcements and course materials. Students will also complete discussion boards through BBL. If you are unable to access BBL at any time, please notify the course instructor.

Extra Credit Policy: Extra credit is offered at the discretion of the instructor based on the needs of the class.

Classroom Devices: Personal laptops and tablets are welcome in class, but students discovered to be surfing the web, watching TV, or doing other classwork will be asked to leave class. Cell phones are expected to be silenced during class unless otherwise discussed with the instructor.

EXPECTATIONS OF CIVILITY

Diversity and Inclusion: The Drexel University Pennoni Honors College is committed to offering a safe, welcoming environment for all students regardless of their racial or ethnic identity, culture, nationality, socioeconomic status, religious or spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and/or physical ability. We highly value diversity and aspire to create a respectful, safe space for all students. To view further information from the Office for Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture (EIC), please visit: <https://drexel.edu/equity-inclusive-culture/>

Office for Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture (EIC)

James E. Marks Intercultural Center
3225 Arch Street, Suite 011
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Religious Observances: https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/religious_observances_calendar/
Embodying a culturally and spiritually diverse community, Drexel University recognizes that on the occasion of important or solemn religious days, certain of its members will observe practices that preclude them from attending to their regular duties whether as faculty members or students. On such

days, it is important for all who do not share in these same practices to accommodate their colleagues and peers.

Behavior Befitting of an Honors Student (Drexel's Conduct Creed):

Student Conduct has established, in accordance with its mission, vision, and values, a code of high standards of behavior to include the following expectations for Students and Student Organizations to:

- Accept responsibility when their choices or actions have negatively impacted themselves, others, or the community at large.
- Engage in constant learning, practice self-reflection, and develop resilience to maintain academic, personal, and professional integrity.
- Foster positive relationships with others.
- Ensure the health, wellness, and safety of themselves and their communities.
- Demonstrate mutual respect and equity within the bounds of the Code of Conduct.

To view Drexel's Student Code of Conduct, please visit: <https://drexel.edu/studentlife/community-standards/code-of-conduct>

UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Calendar: <https://drexel.edu/provost/calendars/academic-calendars/>

Disability Access: <https://drexel.edu/disability-resources/support-accommodations/student-family-resources/>.

Students who seek accommodations for a documented disability will first need to complete an Online Intake Form. For instructions on how to complete the Online Intake Form or for further information on disability services are provided by the university, please visit <https://drexel.edu/disability-resources/support-accommodations/forms/>.

Students who are eligible for accommodations may email disability@drexel.edu to request their Accommodations Verification Letter (AVL). This letter lists the student's approved accommodations and is submitted to instructors once they are requested by the student.

Accommodations cannot be granted by instructors until an AVL is submitted to that instructor. The AVL must be renewed at the beginning of every term because the student's courses and instructors will change, and this may necessitate changes in the student's accommodations.

You may also contact the Disability Resources department within the Office of Equality and Diversity directly at:

Disability Resources Office

Main Building
3141 Chestnut Street, Suite 2281
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: 215.895.1401
Email: disability@drexel.edu

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, Dishonesty, and Cheating: <https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/>

Drexel University expects all members of its community to uphold the highest values of academic integrity. In upholding these values, the University is committed to investigating any allegation of

violations of academic integrity against a student. Violations include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and academic misconduct.

Sanctions for violations of academic integrity are administered through the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards in conjunction with the Office of the Provost and other University offices as deemed appropriate. It is generally the responsibility of the faculty member overseeing the academic activity to report the violation to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards and to determine the appropriate sanction. A student who believes he/she has been wrongly sanctioned has a right to an appeals process.

In addition to any other sanction, the University reserves the right in its sole discretion to withdraw an earned degree even though it has been granted should it be discovered at any time that the work upon which the degree was based, or the academic records in support of such degree, have been falsified. In that situation, the degree will be withdrawn promptly upon discovery of the falsification and the academic record will be updated to reflect the withdrawal of degree.

Course Add/Drop: <http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop>

The course registration adjustment period for adding or dropping courses begins with the opening of a student's time ticket assignment for course registration through Sunday at midnight of the end of Week 1 (Sunday, 11:59 p.m. via the web)

Course Withdraw: <http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal>

Students may withdraw from a course during the withdrawal period beginning at the end of the course Add/Drop Period through Friday of Week 7. A withdrawal from a course will result in a grade of "W" being reflected on a student's transcript with no impact to the student's term and cumulative grade point average (GPA).

A course withdrawal is not permitted in situations involving academic dishonesty. A course withdrawal that was processed before a final sanction of academic dishonesty is applied will revert to the grade assigned by the instructor in accordance with the Academic Integrity Policy.

Course Change Policy: *Communicate the prerogative of the faculty member to change the course during the term at his, or her, discretion. Articulate how, and when, these changes will be communicated to students.*

Grades of "Incomplete": https://drexel.edu/provost/policies-calendars/policies/incomplete_grades/

Appropriate Use of Course Materials: <https://drexel.edu/it/about/policies/policies/01-Acceptable-Use/>.

It is important to recognize that some or all of the course materials provided to you may be the intellectual property of Drexel University, the course instructor, or others. Briefly, this policy states that course materials, including recordings, provided by the course instructor may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or re-posted. Doing so may be considered a breach of this policy and will be investigated and addressed as possible academic dishonesty, among other potential violations. Improper use of such materials may also constitute a violation of the University's Code of Conduct found here:

<https://drexel.edu/cpo/policies/cpo-1/> and will be investigated as such.

Complete list of University policies: <https://drexel.edu/compliance-privacy-audit/policy/policy-directory/>

DREXEL RESOURCES

Drexel Library: <https://www.library.drexel.edu/>

Drexel Writing Center: <https://drexel.edu/coas/academics/departments-centers/english-philosophy/university-writing-program/drexel-writing-center/>

Office of Counseling and Health Services Counseling Center

Drexel Counseling Center

201 Creese Student Center,
3210 Chestnut St., Philadelphia PA 19104
Phone: 215.895.1415

Appointment Hours: Monday - Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

After-Hours Emergency On-Call Counseling Center: 215.416.3337

Public Safety: 215.895.2222; or Dial 9-1-1.

The Counseling Center offers a range of free, confidential counseling services to currently enrolled full-time undergraduate and graduate students in an atmosphere that is welcoming and comfortable for all students.

The Counseling Center takes a goal-focused and collaborative approach to counseling and mental health treatment. We strive to provide immediate, meaningful care focused on the change each student wants to make to improve their lives from their first contact with our office, and we have a range of follow up options available based on individual needs. We help students reduce psychological symptoms, cope with painful life events and developmental tasks, improve interpersonal skills, increase self-knowledge and develop a resiliency so they are better able to respond to problems and concerns as they arise.

For more information, please visit: <https://drexel.edu/counselingandhealth/counseling-center/overview/>

Nondiscrimination and Sexual Misconduct: Drexel University is committed to providing a working and learning environment free from sexual harassment and it is the policy of the University that sexual harassment in any form is unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated.

Management and supervisory personnel, at all levels, are responsible for taking reasonable and necessary action to prevent sexual harassment. All members of the University community, faculty, staff and students, are required to promptly report any and all conduct which might be in violation of this policy.

The University will:

- respond to all complaints of sexual harassment pursuant to the published Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Resolution Procedure;
- take action to provide remedies when sexual harassment is discovered;
- impose appropriate sanctions upon individuals who have been found to be in violation of the University's policy; and
- protect the privacy of those involved in sexual harassment complaints, to the extent possible.

The above actions will apply to the extent permitted by law.

FOR EMERGENCY REPORTS CALL:

Drexel University Police Department
3219 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Phone: 215-895-2222 (or Philadelphia Police: 911)

FOR ALL OTHER REPORTS: Submit an EIC report directly through this [form](#) or contact the Drexel

[Title IX Coordinator](#).