Takeshi Kitano, aka Beat Takeshi, is probably the most famous contemporary Japanese actor, filmmaker, and personality. This course will take up the issue of a continuum, or a “thin blue line,” between male homosociality and homosexuality as theorized by Eve Sedgwick in her *Between Men*, by exploring the role of desire in male friendship, male love and homophobia in the context of three Kitano films: *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, *Sonatine*, and *Taboo*. We will be attentive to how male friendships are protected from, or conversely, directly confront homoeroticism, as well as to how women figure as objects between men. We will consider other issues in relation to the specific historical contexts of the three films: (1) colonialism, wartime ethics, and racial politics for *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*; (2) Yakuza characters as film tropes and Okinawan-Japanese ethnic politics for *Sonatine*; and (3) the politics of male-male relations in samurai culture for *Taboo*.

**Course Requirements:**
- Attendance and participation: 20%
- Presentation: 20%
- Three 5 page papers: 20% each

This class meets once a week for only seven sessions. Any unexcused absence will negatively impact your grade. Late papers will be accepted, but progressively penalized for tardiness.

**Statement on Plagiarism**
Plagiarism means: presenting as your own someone else’s words, ideas, opinions, and/or argument. You must be sure to cite your sources, include a bibliography, and use quotation marks when you incorporate another person’s words or language verbatim. This includes buying a paper! Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Dean for disciplinary action(s). Confirmation of plagiarism will mean a failure for the class.
**** On Japanese names: Japanese names are in the opposite order of American ones, so the FAMILY NAME (our last name) comes first, and the GIVEN NAME is second. (Like in a bibliographic list, but without a comma: i.e. Cornyetz Nina).

Students are required to bring a copy of the assigned readings to class.

**Required Books**
For sale at Bluestockings, 172 Allen Street between Stanton and Rivington – (1 block south of Houston and 1st Avenue). Buy these in the beginning of the class, the bookstore sends back unsold copies. Also on reserve at Bobst Library.


**Book Chapters and Articles, available on Blackboard**


Schedule

   WATCH “Taboo” in class

2. Nov. 2: A Continuum in Edo Japan (short lecture, 4 genders?)
   Read: Corrigan, A Short Guide (the book; you can read the sample essays
   if you like); Davis, “Takeshi Kitano” (blackboard); Pflugfelder,
   Cartographies of Desire, 23-145.
   Presentation: Between Men in Taboo.

3. Nov. 9: Transformations 1
   WATCH “Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence” in class
   Read: Girard, p 1-82; Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire 146-234.
   Paper 1 due

4. Nov. 16: Between Cultures (short lecture, Bhabha on desire)
   Read: Girard, 83-95; Jackson, “Desire at Cross-Cultural Purposes,”
   (blackboard); Tanaka, Hidden Horrors, pp. 197-216 (blackboard)
   Presentation: Between Men in “Merry Christmas

5. Nov. 23: Korean Japanese
   WATCH “Blood and Bones” in class
   Read: Pflugfelder, 286-335
   Paper 2 due

6. Nov. 30: Male Pastimes
   WATCH “Sonatine” in class
   Read: Sedgwick, Between Men, 1-48; Allen, “Okinawa, Ambivalence,
   Identity, Japan,” (blackboard);

7. Dec. 7: A Homosocial Rupture or Continuum?
   Narrative in Modern Japanese Fiction, 1-60 (typescript; blackboard)
   Presentation: Between Men in Sonatine
   Paper 3 Due.