The Japanese author Mishima has been called “everyone’s favorite homo-fascist.” And, he may be better known in the West for his performative suicide in 1970 by ritual disembowelment than for his writings. But he is well known for his fiction as well—a complex set of narratives that follow an aesthetic that privileges art above life, or reality. In this course we will read a selection of fiction by Mishima, alongside supplementary secondary sources, and screen the films “Patriotism” and “Black Lizard.” We will ask: How and why did his life become so intertwined with his art? What was performative about his life and writings? Why have so many Western critics psychoanalyzed Mishima? What can queer theory bring to an analysis of Mishima’s narratives? We will hope to come away from the course with a better understanding of both Mishima the man and his literature.

**Course Requirements:**

- Attendance and participation: 20%
- Presentation: 30%
- Final paper: 50%

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.

- Participation is a vital part of this class, and therefore also your grade. If you have a very difficult time talking in class come to see me during office hours EARLY in the semester so we can talk about what we can do.
- Laptops are allowed in class. However, if you choose to spend your time on social media please choose a seat in the back of the class, and be aware that it will negatively impact your grade in the end. It is far more obvious to the professor than you may think.

Presentations: Five students will present during four of the classes as indicated on the syllabus, and must coordinate with each other so there is no repetition
among the five. Students are to choose a particularly representative, interesting, difficult, or etc. passage from the readings due (either primary or secondary text) to read in class, and offer some intellectual and analytic reaction of their own as well. Why this choice? The presenting students must each hand in a 3-4 page analytic response paper for grading on their presentation day as well.

**Course Objectives:** We aim to gain a better understanding of Mishima Yukio, his “aesthetics,” his “perversion,” and his writings.

**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).

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

**Required Books:**
For sale at Shakespeare and Co. Also on reserve at Bobst Library.


**Supplementary text:**


**Required Articles and Chapters on NYU Classes**


Supplementary Texts on NYU Classes (not required)


**** 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).
Schedule

January 29, Week One, introduction
In class film, Schrader’s “Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters”

February 5, Week Two: Historical Context 1

February 12, Week Three: Confession and the shishôsetsu
Short lecture: intro to shishôsetsu genre.
Readings: Mishima, Confessions of a Mask; Abelsen, “Ironic and Purity.”
Student Presentations 1

February 19, Week Four: The Aesthetics of Death
In class film, “Patriotism”
Short lecture: the drive and the gaze
Readings: Mishima, Patriotism; Seidensticker, “Mishima Yukio”
Student Presentations 2

February 26, Week Five: Art, Imagination, Reality
Short lecture: Deleuze, sadism and masochism.
Student Presentations 3

March 5, Week Six: Mishima and the “autofictional machine”
Short lecture: Walker on Mishima.
Readings: Mishima, Sun and Steel, Cornyetz, “Naming Desire,” in The Ethics of Aesthetics
Student Presentations 4

March 12, Week Seven: Sexuality and Performance
In class film: “Black Lizard”
Readings: Vincent, “Yukio Mishima: Everybody’s Favorite Homofascist,”
Wrapping it up
Final paper due.