Murder and More: 3 Films by Imamura Shohei

Imamura Shohei (1926-2006) was one of Japan’s most highly acclaimed film directors, twice awarded the Cannes’ Golden Palm award. This course will explore three of his films, The Insect Woman, Pigs and Battleships, and Vengeance is Mine, each of which takes a hard look at the seedy side of modern Japanese society, depicting, respectively, a prostitute, gangsters, and a serial murderer. We will support our film viewings with analytic treatments of the films, alongside readings on Japanese history and tradition. Possible texts include: Gluck, Postwar Japan as History, Heath, Questions of Cinema; Washburn and Cavanaugh, Word and Image in Japanese Cinema

Course Requirements:
Attendance and participation 20%
Presentation 20%
3 papers (20% each) 60%

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.

Papers: Take one scene from each film and using a formal syntactical analysis, show how the film “signifies” its message in that scene. Papers should be approximately 3 pages in length.

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 Bluestockings, 172 Allen Street between Stanton and Rivington – (1 block south of Houston and 1st Avenue).


Schedule


2. Tuesday, March 27: How To Read a Film
   In class: Watch *Pigs and Battleships* (end of class)

3. Tuesday, April 3: *Pigs and Battleships*
   Short lecture: sex work and gangsters in Japanese history into the postwar
   Student Presentation 1
   First Paper Due

4. Tuesday, April 10: *Insect Woman*
   In class: Watch *Insect Woman*

5. Tuesday, April 17: Interlude on cinema and psychoanalysis
   Short lecture: Freud, the drives; Metz, systemics
   Read Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, 76-130.
   Student Presentation 2
   Second Paper due

6. Tuesday, April 24: Vengeance
   Watch: Vengeance is Mine
   Read: Washburn, “The Arrest of Time” (Blackboard); Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, 130-144; 176-220.

7. Tuesday, May 1: Vengeance 2
   Student Presentation 3
   Third Paper Due
   No new readings.