

**Syllabus**  
**Byrne Seminar, Fall 2021**

**01:090:101:14 “Friendship in Japan: A Cross-Cultural Inquiry”**

**Time:** Wed. 1:00-2:20pm

**Dates:** Sept. 1-Nov. 10, 2021

**Location:** Scott Hall Rm. 116

**Instructor:** Paul G. Schalow, Professor of Japanese Literature

**Office:** Scott Hall Rm. 330

**Office hours:** Wed. 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

**E-mail:** [schalow@rutgers.edu](mailto:schalow@rutgers.edu)

**Seminar Description**

Friendship can be understood as the human need to appreciate and be appreciated by another person. At first glance, it seems a natural and unproblematic part of the human experience, but when dealing with friendship across cultures, the concept of friendship becomes surprisingly complex.

Drawing on Japanese pop culture, cinema, and textual representations of friendship, this seminar will explore themes such as friendship’s universality versus cultural specificity, its relationship to romance, and the impact of age, status, ethnicity, gender, and species on configurations of friendship.

In class discussion, students will have a chance to draw on their own experience of friendship and share their knowledge of how friendship is represented in other literary and cinematic traditions.

**Assignments**

Seven written assignments are due as indicated in the schedule below; six reflection papers may be written jointly (2-3 students) or individually; final paper must be written individually.

**Grading**

This is a 1-credit seminar. Students taking the seminar receive Credit/No-Credit as their final grade. Two unexcused absences and missed assignments will result in “No Credit.”

Presentations, reflection papers, and participation 70% (7x10pts)

Final paper 30%

**Films**

*Dersu Uzala: The Hunter* dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1980 (142 mins.)

*Empire of the Sun* dir. Steven Spielberg, 1987 (152 mins.)

*The Longest Night in Shanghai* dir. Yibai Zhang, 2007 (110 mins.)

*Okoge* dir. Takehiro Nakajima, 1993 (120 mins.)

*Jules and Jim* dir. Francois Truffaut, 1962 (105 mins.)

**Required Texts**

Natsume Sōseki, *Kokoro*

Yoshimoto Banana, *Kitchen*

## Seminar Schedule

- Sept 1 Wed Introduction to the seminar: philosophical and pop-psych perspectives on friendship. PDF Sandra Lynch, "Aristotle and Derrida on friendship" (*Contretemps* 3, July 2002).
- 8 [Mon. schedule—NO CLASS]
- 15 Assignment #1 (10 students): Introduce to the class a favorite film, anime, manga, or text on friendship (approximately 5-10 minutes) and submit 1-page summary or outline.
- 22 Assignment #2: View film *Dersu Uzala* and submit 1-page reflection paper on the distinction between *friendship* and *camaraderie*, or the *basis of cross-cultural* friendships.
- 29 Assignment #1 (10 students): Introduce to the class a favorite film, anime, manga, or text on friendship (approximately 5-10 minutes) and submit 1-page summary or outline.
- Oct. 6 Assignment #3: Read Natsume Soseki's *Kokoro* and submit 1-page reflection paper on *cross-generational* or *same-gender* friendships.
- 13 Assignment #4: View film *Empire of the Sun* OR *The Longest Night in Shanghai* and submit 1-page reflection paper on the distinction between *non-utilitarian (selfless)* and *utilitarian (selfish)* friendships, or the *basis of cross-cultural* friendships.
- 20 Assignment #5: Read Yoshimoto Banana's *Kitchen* and submit 1-page reflection paper on *cross-generational friendships, same-gender vs. other-gender* friendships, or *friendship as a form of family*.
- 27 Assignment #6: View film *Okoge* OR *Jules and Jim* and submit 1-page reflection paper on *friendship as a form of family*.
- Nov 3 Assignment #7 (10 students): Prepare final paper (approx. 1,000 words) on a topic covered in the seminar and present your ideas (5-10 minutes) to the class.
- Nov. 10 Assignment #7 (10 students): Prepare final paper (approx. 1,000 words) on a topic covered in the seminar and present your ideas (5-10 minutes) to the class.