

Animism, Altered States and the Afterlife: Japanese Theater and Film from the Heian Era to the present Day

This course will focus on representations of ghosts, the spirit world and the supernatural in literature, theater and film as a vehicle to study Japanese history and culture. An analysis of the precepts of Shinto and Buddhism as the fundamentals of spirituality will lay the basis for discussion. Selected readings from *Genji monogatari* and *Heike monogatari* will be used to trace characters and events, how they are dramatized in Noh and Kabuki and figure in films such as *Kwaidan*, and how they signal changes in political, social and cultural life. These metamorphoses from the Heian Era through the Shogunates and into the Edo period will incorporate a study of *samurai* culture and attitudes to death and the afterlife and how this has influenced themes in classical theater modes (*The Battle of Ichinotani*, *The Scarlet Princess of Edo*) and contemporary film (*Ran*, *Ugetsu*). Depictions of WWII (*Grave of the Fireflies*, *Barefoot Gen*), contemporary Japanese culture (*Spirited Away*, *Samurai Champloo*) and the horror film genre (*Ju-On*, *The Grudge*) will conclude the course.

Prof. Henry Shaffer, Chair
Department of Theater and Dance
Bridgewater State College
Bridgewater, MA