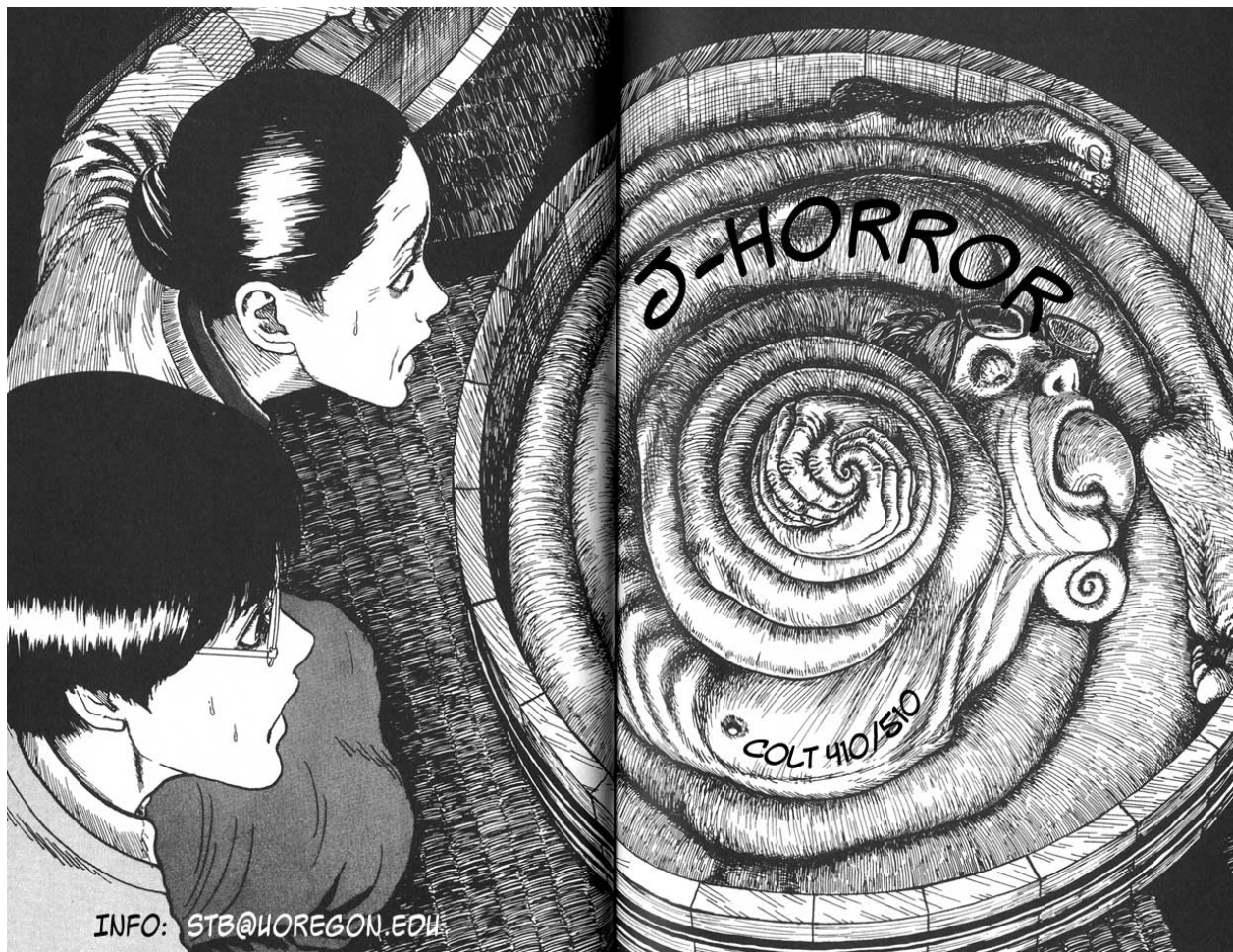


COLT 410/510: J-Horror Cinema



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Course Description

Since the late 1990s, fans of Asian cinema have witnessed a renaissance of films in the horror genre. Directors such as Nakata Hideo, Kurosawa Kiyoshi, Miike Takashi, and Shimizu Takashi from Japan, Herman Yau, Fruit Chan, and the Pang Brothers from Hong Kong, Kim Ki-duk, Kim Dong-bin, Park Chan-wook, and Bong Joon-ho from South Korea, Kelvin Tong from Singapore, Songyos Sugmakanan from Thailand, and Yam Laranas from the Philippines have contributed in distinctive ways to the new Asian Horror that emerged in the late 90s and continues to enjoy critical and box-office success today. The fact that nearly a dozen Hollywood remakes of Asian horror films have debuted in the past decade—including remakes of *The Grudge*, *Dark Water*, *Pulse*, *One Missed Call*, *The Eye*, *Shutter*, and *A Tale of Two Sisters*—is striking evidence that Asian Horror has finally received the recognition it deserves as a movement that may be as significant to global cinema as the French New Wave was in the late 1950s and early 60s.

This seminar focuses on the most prolific source of Asian Horror: namely, J-Horror. Contemporary Japanese horror cinema has spawned so many imitators, in terms of subject matter, style, and cinematic technique, that J-Horror has practically become a movement unto itself. During the course of our investigations, we will consider everything from vengeful ghost stories to serial killer thrillers, from body horror to techno-horror.

With respect to J-Horror as a subgenre of horror, we will consider the following questions:

1. What does J-Horror owe to traditional folklore and forms of visual art?
2. How are monsters conceived and depicted? What sort of creatures and phenomena are included along the continuum of Japanese conceptions of monstrosity?
3. How is modernity problematized in J-Horror?
4. What is the phenomenology of horror? What makes us afraid? How does horror elicit feelings of dread, suspense, terror, shock, and fear? It has been said that horror is a “guilty pleasure.” What is so pleasurable about it? What is the sociological function served by arousing such affective states?

In analyzing specific examples of J-Horror cinema, we will pose questions such as:

1. How does setting enframe the horror film and provide atmosphere? How does the space in which horror occurs (e.g., a haunted house, hospital, warehouse, or desolate urban landscape) contribute to its visualization and narrativization?
2. What role does technology play? What are the technical devices by means of which the story is accelerated or decelerated? How do material objects enter into the configuration of horror?
3. What sort of power relations exist between the victims of horror and its agents (monsters, ghosts, demons, and so forth)? How is their characterization marked in terms of gender, sexuality, and race?
4. What is the status of the body in horror? How is the body fragmented, transformed, mutated, violated?
5. How are socioeconomic structures and institutions depicted? How is the family represented? What other institutions appear? How does ideology enter into the horror film?

Warning: The subject matter of this course is for mature audiences only. Some films contain scenes of intense psychological stress, graphic violence, and body mutation. Viewer discretion is advised.

Readings in English. No auditors permitted.