JAPN 4900.003
Special Problems
Japanese, Advanced level, Introduction to Manga Scriptwriting
漫画脚本概論 — 話し言葉のスタイルとキャラクター造形

Instructor: Dr. Kaori Furuya **Email:** kaori.furuya@unt.edu **Office:** Lang 405G

Phone Number: 940-565-2404 (main office)

Class Hour: 2:00–3:00pm on Tuesday

in person

Office Hour: 8:20–9:20 am on Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment

Course Description & Objectives:

This course introduces the principles of manga scriptwriting (*manga kyakuhon*) through the lens of characterization in spoken Japanese. Using authentic Japanese-language sources, including manga-writing textbooks by professional manga artists and selected manga series, students will examine how varying spoken styles of Japanese—such as *yakuwarigo* (role language), gendered speech, levels of politeness, dialect, and age-related speech—shape a character's gender, social standing, and age, and how these choices help readers find characters relatable and become immersed in the story.

Students will analyze dialogue from *Übel Blatt*, *Dorohedoro*, *Ruri Dragon*, *Made in Abyss*, *Cinderella Gray*, and works by Mori Kaoru, comparing how speech differs across types of societies and relationships between characters. Students will also observe not only the original meaning of the dialogue when translated into English, but also the additional nuances that are conveyed in the original Japanese.

This course has three main goals:

a. **Content Knowledge:** Understand the basic principles of manga scriptwriting (story structure, scene construction, *name*/storyboard, and dialogue) and how spoken-language styles construct characters' gender, social standing, age, and relationships.
b. **Japanese Language Skills:** Develop the ability to read authentic Japanese manga and craft-book sources and use topic-specific vocabulary (e.g., 役割語, 敬語, 方言, 一人称, 文末表現) productively, rather than simply recognizing it, including writing dialogue in appropriately differentiated speech styles.
c. **Research and Creative Skills:** Practice framing research questions, conducting close reading and discourse analysis of dialogue, and applying findings to an original creative work (a manga script). These skills will help students prepare for graduate school or creative-industry portfolios, including statements of purpose and writing samples.

Method: This course relies on secondary and documentary sources and on close reading of published manga. Students will analyze craft books by professional manga artists and dialogue excerpts from the manga listed below. No surveys or questionnaires will be conducted. This approach emphasizes text and discourse analysis, which students then apply in writing an original script. Dialogue excerpts are used for educational analysis only; students quote short passages with citation.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

a. Explain the basic structure and process of manga scriptwriting, from concept and character design to script and storyboard (*name*).
b. Read and interpret authentic Japanese-language manga dialogue and craft-book sources, and use topic-specific vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.
c. Analyze how varying spoken styles (role language, gendered speech, politeness, dialect, and age-related speech) convey gender, social standing, age, and relationships in different types of societies, including nuances that are lost or changed in English translation.
d. Develop and present an original manga script in which differentiated speech styles characterize the cast, supported by an analytical commentary that demonstrates basic academic research skills.

Readings

Required

- 竹宮惠子 (2010).『マンガの脚本概論』. KADOKAWA.
- 大場渉・森薫・入江亜季 (2025).『マンガの原理』. KADOKAWA.

Manga for dialogue analysis (excerpts selected by the instructor; students obtain the volumes through the library or purchase)

- *Übel Blatt* (ユーベルブラット): A dark fantasy of war between empires and kingdoms, following a betrayed soldier who seeks revenge on his former comrades. Used to study formal, military, and noble speech and rank-based address.
- *Dorohedoro* (ドロヘドロ): A violent, darkly comic fantasy set in a lawless slum (the Hole) and the sorcerers' world, centered on a man with a lizard's head searching for the sorcerer who cursed him. Used to compare rough, slang-heavy speech with the speech of a hierarchical society.
- *Ruri Dragon* (ルリドラゴン): A slice-of-life story about a high school girl who discovers she is half dragon. Used to study everyday speech among teenagers, friends, and family.
- *Made in Abyss* (メイドインアビス): An adventure fantasy in which a young girl and a robot boy descend into a vast, dangerous pit called the Abyss. Used to study children's speech, adult–child speech, and highly distinctive character voices.
- *Cinderella Gray* (ウマ娘 シンデレラグレイ): A sports drama about Oguri Cap, a girl from a local racetrack who rises to the top level of racing. Used to study regional-to-standard speech, rivalry, and the speech of coaches, rivals, and teammates.
- Works by Mori Kaoru (森薫): *Emma* (エマ) is a Victorian-era romance between a maid and a gentleman, and *Otoyomegatari* (乙嫁語り) depicts family and village life along the Silk Road in Central Asia. Used to study speech shaped by social class, gender, age, and culture.

Additional short articles and handouts will be provided on Canvas.

Grading scales

Weekly Reading & Dialogue Responses — 20%
Quizzes — 10%
Character Speech Profile Report — 20%
Presentation — 15%
Final Project: Original Script and Commentary — 35%

A: 90–100 B: 80–89 C: 70–79 D: 60–69 F: Below 60

- **Weekly Reading & Dialogue Responses — 20%** Students will submit a short response each week to demonstrate their understanding of the assigned reading and to analyze a short dialogue

excerpt from the week's manga. Responses may be written in English, with a few simple Japanese sentences using the week's target vocabulary.

- **Quizzes — 10%** Short quizzes will check students' understanding of key concepts in manga scriptwriting, speech-style terminology, and Japanese vocabulary covered in class.
- **Character Speech Profile Report — 20%** Students will write a report analyzing how speech styles characterize several characters in one selected manga (gender, social standing, age, and relationships), including a comparison with English translation where possible. This assignment will develop the research question and evidence base for the final project.
- **Presentation — 15%** Students will give a short presentation on their analysis and on the design of their own characters' speech, explaining the main findings and how they will apply them. Simple Japanese may be incorporated when appropriate.
- **Final Project: Original Script and Commentary — 35%** Students will complete an original manga script (a short episode or one-shot), with dialogue written in Japanese in clearly differentiated speech styles. The script will be accompanied by an English-language commentary explaining the speech-style choices and the findings from the course, and a short Japanese vocabulary component.

Grading Scale

- A: 90–100
- B: 80–89
- C: 70–79
- D: 60–69
- F: Below 60

Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	Main Activity
1	Introduction to Manga Scriptwriting	Read Takemiya (2010), opening chapters; preview of course manga and key vocabulary (役割語, キャラクター, セリフ).
2	From Idea to Script	Read Takemiya (2010) on story structure; compare a script (*kyakuhon*) with a storyboard (*name*).
3	Principles of Manga Expression	Read Ōba, Mori & Irie (2025) on panel layout and dialogue balloons; analyze where speech sits on the page.
4	Character Design and Voice	Read Ōba, Mori & Irie (2025) on characters; discuss Mori Kaoru's approach to character and setting.
5	Role Language (*Yakuwarigo*)	Introduce the concept of role language; identify role-language patterns in *Übel Blatt* and *Dorohedoro*.
6	Gender and Speech	Study gendered speech patterns and their exceptions; analyze examples in *Ruri Dragon*.
7	Social Standing and Politeness	Study keigo, titles, and first/second-person forms; analyze status relationships in works by Mori Kaoru.
8	Age and Relationships	Analyze speech of children and adults, and speech between close and distant relationships, in *Made in Abyss*.

Week	Topic	Main Activity
9	Different Societies, Different Speech	Compare speech across social worlds in *Dorohedoro* and *Übel Blatt*; discuss dialect and register. Character Speech Profile Report due.
10	Translation and Nuance	Compare Japanese dialogue with English translation in *Cinderella Gray* and other excerpts; discuss lost and added nuances.
11	Writing Dialogue Workshop	Write short scenes in which two characters differ by gender, status, or age; peer feedback.
12	Character Speech Sheets and Plot	Build speech sheets for the cast of the final project; outline plot and *name* following Takemiya (2010).
13	Script Workshop	Submit and discuss a draft of the script and commentary.
14	Revision and Editing	Revise the script and finalize the commentary and the Japanese vocabulary component.
15	Final Presentation and Wrap-Up	Present the final project and reflect on findings and future goals. Final Project due.

The calendar is subject to change.

ADA Accommodation Statement:

The most current statement regarding disability accommodation is provided on the ODA website https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access/faculty/faculty-guide/syllabus-statement.html

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodation during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website.

Guidelines on Resolving Student Concerns in the WLLC Department:

When a student has a course-related concern about their instructor (e.g., appeal a grade, disagreement about attendance record, interpretation of a class assignment, assigned grades, etc.), the following steps should be taken to resolve the issue:

1. The student should first attempt to informally resolve their concern by speaking directly with their instructor.
2. If there is no satisfactory resolution to their concern, the student should email a description of the issue to Dr. Christoph Weber, chair of the WLLC department (christoph.weber@unt.edu).
3. The department chair will contact the assistant/associate chair of the WLLC department. They will meet with the student and instructor separately to resolve the issue.

4. The department chair will inform the student about the resolution of their concern.

Guidelines on Grade Appeals in the WLLC Department:

Students should attempt to resolve the grade dispute with their instructor first. If there is no satisfactory resolution, the student can initiate a grade appeal with the instructor based on the following criteria:

1. The grade is based on unfair treatment during the regularly scheduled class period.
2. The instructor deviated from the guidelines outlined in the course syllabus without providing a valid academic reason, or
3. An error occurred in calculating the grade, including the failure to factor in an assignment, project, quiz, or examination.

UNT CARE Team:

The mission of the CARE Team is to:

- Assist in protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the students and members of the UNT community.
- Support student success.
- Provide a comprehensive response to students whose behavior could be harmful to themselves or others.

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class. The calendar is subject to change. Additional details can be found in the Emergency Notifications and Procedures Policy.