Sexuality and Culture in Japan
Shifting dimensions of desire, relationship and society

Section 1

Instructor/Title  Jeffry T. Hester, Ph.D.

[Course Outline / Description]

Sexuality is often understood, and experienced, as among the most private and personal aspects of human life. But like other areas of human action, sexuality is shaped within society, and varies cross-culturally and historically. While long-term trends in Japan show young people to be increasingly sexually active, analysts also note a trend of flagging interest in sex among many youth. Young people can choose mates with much less social pressure than in the past, but fewer are finding marriage partners. Sexualization in the media continues apace, even as depictions in the media are subject to scrutiny and regulation. At the same time, voices from increasingly dynamic movements built around lesbian, gay, transgender and queer identities are making their presence felt in the public arena. Sexuality is a contested and dynamic field in Japan. In this course, we will explore this topic with the aim of building a framework for understanding the complex currents of this aspect of human life within the historical, social and cultural context of Japan.

Topics for exploration will include changing aspects of mating, romance and marriage; conjugal sexual relations, contraceptive practice, and abortion; sex education in Japanese schools; extramarital relationships and their gendered dimensions; the exploitation and commodification of sexual and emotional ties, from Japan’s licensed quarters of earlier times to military sex slaves (“comfort women”), the worlds of hostesses and hosts of the mizu shōbai, and sex work; sexual violence in Japan; and the dynamic shifts occurring as regards lesbian, gay, transgender and other minoritized sexual and gender identities and practices in Japan, including the new “LGBT” identity model, moves toward recognition of same-sex partnerships, and challenges to dominant discourses and practices regarding legal recognition of gender identity, medicalized models of transgender, and non-binary gender identities.

Section 2

[Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes]

Students in this course will undertake activities to acquire a richer understanding of the shifting beliefs and practices surrounding sexuality in Japan, including the changing sexual landscape reflected in sexual practices and attitudes among young people in Japan; the role of the state in the regulation of sexuality; minority sexual and gender identities and practices, and the proliferation of commodified sexual imagery and erotic and emotional services. Students will work to become acquainted with an anthropological approach to issues of sexuality, with native points of view and cross-cultural comparison integrated into the approach to topics. Students will also gain practice in developing sound analysis supported by data and expressed in logical argument through writing and in-class discussion.
Section 3

Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials

Schedule

• Class 1
  Introduction to the course

Sex, sexuality, culture

• Class 2

• Class 3
  VIDEO: Onda Matsuri (fertility festival)

Heteronormative coupling: Gender complementarity and the division of labor

• Class 4
  6. Edwards, Walter, Chapters 5, 6, from Modern Japan Through Its Weddings
  WEDDING VIDEO

Marriage, sexuality and the regulation of reproduction

• Class 5
  7. Coleman, Samuel, “Ch. 7: Sexuality”
  9. Ogino, Miho, “You can Have Abortions, but No Oral Contraceptive Pills”

“Sexual revolution” among youth in Japan?

• Class 6
  11. White, Merry, “Doing What Comes Naturally: Media and Marketing Constructions of Sexuality among Japanese Adolescents”

• Class 7

• Class 8
  4. Farrer, James, Haruka Tsuchiya, and Bart Bagrowicz, “Emotional Expression in Tsukiau Dating Relationships in Japan”

• Class 9

Sexuality, gender, nation and race

• Class 10
FILM:  *Slaying the Dragon* (Deborah Gee, 1988, 60 mins.)

- Class 11

- Class 12
  MIDTERM EXAM

**Sex, labor and commodification**

- Class 13
  27. Hane, Mikiso, “Poverty and Prostitution”

- Class 14
  33. Oh, Bonnie B. C., “The Japanese Imperial System and the Korean ‘Comfort Women’ of World War II”
  36. Kingston, Jeff, “Continuing Controversy of ‘comfort women’”

FILM:  *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women* (Kim-Gibson, 1999, 57 min.)

- Class 15

- Class 16

- Class 17

**Sexual violence in Japan**

- Class 18

**Emotional labor and the commodification of romance**

- Class 19
  37. Takeyama, Akiko, “Intimacy for Sale: Masculinity, Entrepreneurship, and Commodity Self in Japan’s Neoliberal Situation”

FILM:  *The Great Happiness Space* (Jake Clennell, 2006, 75 min.)

- Class 20
  Gagné, Nana Okura (2016). "Feeling like a 'Man': Managing Gender,

### Queer Japan? Minority sexual and gender identities

**Class 21**


**Class 22**

41. McLelland, Mark, “Is there a Japanese ‘gay identity’?”

FILM: *HUSH!* (HASHIGUCHI Ryōsuke, 2001)

**Class 23**

43. Lunsing, Wim, “*Kono sekai* (the Japanese Gay Scene): Communities or Just Playing Around?”

### Stigmatized identities and coming out in Japan

**Class 24**


### Lesbian experiences

**Class 25**

46. Kirara, “A Lesbian in Hokkaido”


FILM: *Plica-chan* (AMAMIYA Sae, UCHIDA Yoshi, 2006, 32 min.)

**Class 26**

49. Tsubuku, Masako, “Assemblywoman puts sex on the agenda”

50. Sawabe, Hitomi, “The Symbolic Tree of Lesbianism in Japan”

### Transgender identities and medical and legal frameworks

**Class 27**

52. McLelland, Mark, “From the Stage to the Clinic: Changing Transgender Identities in Post-war Japan”

54. “Sex law recognition law enacted”/“Transsexuals’ SOS answered”

FILM: *Shinjuku Boys* (Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams, 1995, 53 min.)

**Class 28**


2019 Spring Semester

Japan’s Law No. 111.” In The Transgender Studies Reader 2, S. Stryker and A. Aizura, eds. New York: Routledge, pp. 591-603. [BB only]

• Class 29
  55. Hirano, Keiji, “Transsexual assembly member…”
  56. “School accepts lad…”/“Divorcees with gender disorder…”
  57. Kameya, Yuzuru and Yoshihiro Narita, “A Clinical and Psycho-
      Sociological Case Study on Gender Identity Disorder in Japan”
  58. American Psychiatric Association, “Gender Identity Disorder”
  59. “Appendix: The International Bill of Gender Rights”


Marriage equality and sexual citizenship
• Class 30

COURSE EVALUATION

Final exams week
FINAL IN-CLASS EXAM (TBA)

[Textbooks/Reading Materials]
Course readings will be available on the course Blackboard.

Section 4
[Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric]
Students will be evaluated on the basis of
(1) in-class performance, including class participation, preparation of readings, and other assignments (15%);
(2) a midterm and a final exam (20% x 2 = 40%);
(3) two 4-5-page film/reading reaction essays (20% x 2 = 40%);
(4) a brief sexuality commentary report (5%).

Section 5
[Additional Information]
A guest speaker is planned for the section of the course addressing issues of transgender identity in Japan.