

# Sexuality and Culture in Japan

## Shifting dimensions of desire, relationship and society

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| Instructor/Title | Jeffry T. Hester, Ph.D. |
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### 【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

- 3 Sept (M)

Introduction to the course

#### **Sex, sexuality, culture**

- 5 Sept (W)

1. Harding, Jennifer, “Investigating Sex: Essentialism and Constructionism”

- 10 Sept (M)

3. Smith, Robert J. and Ella Lury Wiswell, “Sex: Public and Private”

VIDEO: *Onda Matsuri* (fertility festival)

#### **Heteronormative coupling: Gender complementarity and the division of labor**

- 12 Sept (W)

6. Edwards, Walter, Chapters 5, 6, from *Modern Japan Through Its Weddings*

WEDDING VIDEO

#### **Marriage, sexuality and the regulation of reproduction**

- 17 Sept (M)

7. Coleman, Samuel, “Ch. 7: Sexuality”

9. Ogino, Miho, “You can Have Abortions, but No Oral Contraceptive Pills”

#### **“Sexual revolution” among youth in Japan?**

- 19 Sept (W)

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

- 24 Sept (M)

Fu, Huiyan (2011). "The Bumpy Road to Socialise Nature: Sex Education in Japan." *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 13 (8): 903-915. [BB]

- 26 Sept (W)

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

- 1 Oct (M)

Castro-Vázquez, Genaro (2015). "Shotgun weddings (*dekichatta kekkon*) in contemporary Japan." *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 17 (6): 747-762.

[BB]

#### **Sexuality, gender, nation and race**

- 3 Oct (W)

9. Napier, Susan, "The Dark Heart of Fantasy: Japanese Women in the Eyes of the Western Male"

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

- 8 Oct (M)

20. Kelsky, Karen, "Gender, Modernity, and Eroticized Internationalism in Japan"

- 10 Oct (W)

MIDTERM EXAM

### **Sex, labor and commodification**

- 15 Oct (M)

27. Hane, Mikiso, "Poverty and Prostitution"

- 17 Oct (W)

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.)

- 22 Oct (M)

- Vartabedian, Sarah (2017). "No Cause for Comfort Here: False Witnesses to 'Peace.'" *Southern Communication Journal* 82 (4): 250-262.

- 24 Oct (W)

28. Group Sisterhood, "Prostitution, Stigma, and the Law in Japan"

- 29 Oct (M)

NO CLASS: (Fall break)

- 31 Oct (W)

- Ho, Swee Lin (2012). "Playing Like Men": The Extramarital Experiences of Women in Contemporary Japan." *Ethnos* 77 (3): 321-343. [BB]

### **Sexual violence in Japan**

- 5 Nov (M)

- Muta, K. (2008). "The making of *sekuhara*: Sexual harassment in Japanese culture." In S. Jackson, J. Liu, J. & J. Woo (Eds.). *East Asian sexualities: Modernity, gender and new sexual cultures* (pp. 52-68). London: Zed Books. [BB]

### **Emotional labor and the commodification of romance**

- 7 Nov (W)

37. Takeyama, Akiko, "Intimacy for Sale: Masculinity, Entrepreneurship, and Commodity Self in Japan's Neoliberal Situation"

38. Onishi, N., "It's 3:30 A.M. The Off-Duty Hostesses Relax. With Hosts."

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

- 12 Nov (M)

Gagné, Nana Okura (2016). "Feeling like a 'Man': Managing Gender, Sexuality, and Corporate Life in After-Hours Tokyo," in T. Zheng (Ed.), *Cultural Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Asia* (pp. 74-91). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. [BB]

### **Queer Japan? Minority sexual and gender identities**

- 14 Nov (W)

40. Furukawa, Makoto, "The Changing Nature of Sexuality: The Three Codes Framing Homosexuality in Modern Japan"

- 19 Nov (M)

41. McLelland, Mark, "Is there a Japanese 'gay identity'?"

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

- 21 Nov (W)

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

### **Stigmatized identities and coming out in Japan**

- 26 Nov (M)

Tamagawa, Masami (2017). "Coming Out of the Closet in Japan: An Exploratory Sociological Study." *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*: 0 1-31.  
[www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1550428X.2017.1338172](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1550428X.2017.1338172) [BB]

### **Lesbian experiences**

- 28 Nov (W)

46. Kirara, "A Lesbian in Hokkaido"

48. Kamano, Saori and Diana Khor, "Defining Lesbian Partnerships"

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

- 3 Dec (M)

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**

- 5 Dec (W)

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.)

• 10 Dec (M)

53. Oe, Chizuka, Masae Torai, Aya Kamikawa, and Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow, “Dialogue: Three Activists on Gender and Sexuality”

Norton, Laura H. (2013), “Neutering the Transgendered: Human Rights and 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]

• 12 Dec (W)

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”

American Psychiatric Association (2013), “Gender Dysphoria.” In *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Publishing, pp. 451-459, 815. [BB only]

### Marriage equality and sexual citizenship

• 17 Dec (M)

Tamagawa, Masami (2016). “Same-Sex Marriage in Japan.” *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 12 (2): 160-187. [BB]

### COURSE EVALUATION

#### Final exams week

• 18~22 Dec (Tu~Sat)

FINAL 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.