

Contemporary Japan in the Gender Matrix

Section 1

Instructor 時限	Isabel Fassbender
Office/Building	
Office Hours	

【Course Outline / Description】

This course discusses and analyses gender issues in contemporary Japanese society and culture. After outlining and discussing fundamental theories of gender and society, we will explore a wide range of topics focusing on how gendered social structures, such as family, work, reproduction, political and economic participation, etc., are interconnected and historically constructed in Japanese society. The construction and function of gendered norms as the basis of the modern Japanese nation-state in negotiation with lived diverse realities will be the leitmotiv that follows us throughout the semester.

The class takes an interactive approach, and students are expected to participate actively. To be able to do so, assigned texts have to be carefully read before class. As for class structure, short text presentations in pre-assigned groups will be followed by discussions and a lecture on each topic. Feedback papers will help to check understanding and identify issues or the need for further discussion. Students are invited to contribute to the continuous revision of the course syllabus with their ideas and suggestions throughout the semester.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

Students will improve their ability to analyze and discuss gender as an indispensable layer of analysis in social, cultural, and economic phenomena and link theory with lived experiences.

This course aims to provide students with the theoretical tools, analytical abilities, and knowledge to understand gender as a constantly underlying factor in all aspects of society and apply them to the specific circumstances and frameworks of contemporary Japan. While trying to understand norms and societal limits, we will also take care not to reproduce stereotypes of Japan by shedding light on how lived realities are not necessarily moving along the lines of normative and institutional restrictions.

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

- ※Texts will be provided online.
- ※Mandatory readings will be assigned weekly.
- ※Contents are subject to change and/or revision.

Course introduction

Session 1

Course introduction, assignments, self-introduction of members, determination of presentation schedule and basic rules/terms

Gender in theory

Session 2

Connell, R. W., & Pearse, R. (2014). The question of gender. In *Gender: In World Perspective*. John Wiley & Sons.

Session 3

Roy, W. G. (2001). Gender. In *Making Societies: The Historical Construction of our World*. Pine Forge Press.

*Session 4 **Group Work***

Pilcher, J., & Whelehan, I. (2004). *50 key concepts in gender studies*. SAGE.

Institutional, economic and political frameworks of gender in Japan

Sessions 5+6+7

Ochiai, E. (2020). The logics of gender construction in Asian modernities. In J. Liu & J. Yamashita (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Gender Studies* (pp. 13-35). Routledge.

LeBlanc, R. M. (2011). The politics of gender in Japan. In V. Bestor, T. C. Bestor, & A. Yamagata (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*. Taylor & Francis.

Frühstück, Sabine (2022). Building the nation and modern manhood. In *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (pp. 19-46). Cambridge University Press.

Chapman, David. (2019). Gender and the Koseki. In J. Coates, L. Fraser, & M. Pendleton (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture*. Routledge.

2023 Fall Semester

Lambert, P. (2021). Gender equality in Japan. In H. Takeda & M. Williams (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Japan* (pp. 348-360). Routledge.

The “Japanese family” and work

Sessions 8+9+10

Ezawa, Aya. (2020). Family, inequality, and the work-family balance in contemporary Japan. In J. Coates, L. Fraser, & M. Pendleton (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture* (pp. 106-114). Routledge.

Steel, Gill (2021). Women’s work at home and in the workplace. In G. Steel (ed.), *Beyond the Gender Gap in Japan* (pp. 25-49). University of Michigan Press.

Goldstein-Gidoni, Ofra (2020). ‘Working fathers’ in Japan: Leading a change in gender relations?. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 27(3), pp. 362-378.

Dasgupta, Romit (2012). Introduction: salarymen in the ‘Lost Decade.’ In *Re-reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities* (pp. 1-22). Routledge.

Gender and politics

Sessions 11+12

Dalton, E. (2017). Women, power and politics under LDP Rule: Gender equity discourses and practices 1955-1993. In *Women and Politics in Contemporary Japan*. Routledge.

Kobayashi, Y. & Kamahara, Y. (2019). Changing legislature, changing politics: Quotas, electoral systems, and political representation. In G. Steel (ed.), *Beyond the Gender Gap in Japan* (pp. 247-264). University of Michigan Press.

Gender and social inequality

Sessions 13 + 14

Cook, E. (2016). Adulthood as action: Changing meanings of adulthood for male part-time workers in contemporary Japan. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 44(3), 317-337.

Ezawa, A. (2016). Single mothers and the postwar Japanese family. In *Single Mothers in Contemporary Japan: Motherhood, Class, and Reproductive Practice*. Lexington Books.

Midterm Exam (ca. 60 min.) + Review Session

Session 15

Midterm Exam: Choose two questions (out of the six provided) in the context of our class contents and answer in ca. 400 words each, using texts and class materials.

Gender and Culture

Sessions 16+17

Inoue, M. (2020). Gender and language. In J. Coates, L. Fraser, & M. Pendleton (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture* (pp. 40-49). Routledge.

Stickland, L. R. (2008). The Takarazuka revue, 1913-2007. In *Gender Gymnastics: Performing and Consuming Japan's Takarazuka Revue* (pp. 17-50). Trans Pacific Press.

Sexuality in contemporary Japan

Sessions 18+19+20

Frühstück, Sabine (2022). Introduction. In *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (pp. 1-18). Cambridge University Press.

Fu, H. (2011). The bumpy road to socialise nature: Sex education in Japan. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 13(8), 903-915.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2011.587894>

Frühstück, Sabine (2022). Sexing visual culture. In *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (pp. 166-190). Cambridge University Press.

Frühstück, Sabine (2022). The politics of sexual labor. In *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (pp. 121-140). Cambridge University Press.

LGBTQ+ in Japan

Sessions 21+22+23

Watch: Kolbeins, Graham (Director) (2019). *Queer Japan* [Film]. Queer Japan. Hiromedia8.

2023 Fall Semester

Frühstück, Sabine (2022). Queer identities and activism. In *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (pp. 141-165). Cambridge University Press.

McLelland, M. (2011). Japan's queer cultures. In V. Bestor, T. C. Bestor, & A. Yamagata (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*. Taylor & Francis.

Wallace, J. (2020). Lesbians and queer women in Japan. In J. Coates, L. Fraser, & M. Pendleton (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture* (pp. 219-228). Routledge.

Dale, S.P.F. (2020). Transgender, non-binary genders, and intersex in Japan. In J. Coates, L. Fraser, & M. Pendleton (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture* (pp. 60-68). Routledge.

Feminisms in Japan

Sessions 24+25+26

Kano, A. (2020). Debates in Japanese feminism. In J. Coates, L. Fraser, & M. Pendleton (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture*. Routledge.

Dales, L. (2009). Feminism and Erotica@the Love Piece Club. In *Feminist Movements in Contemporary Japan*. Routledge.

McLelland, M. (2018). Art as activism in Japan: The case of a good-for-nothing kid and her pussy. In G. Meikle (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism* (pp. 162-170). Routledge.

Final Group Project

Sessions 27+ 28 + 29

“As an international group of young advisors to the Japanese government, you were asked to support the government in its policy-making process with your expert knowledge and highly acclaimed forward-thinking approaches to gender issues.” (focus groups: Political participation, gender in the workplace, families and equality, LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive rights, gender education, gender and violence)

Student Project (Session 27 Preparation, Sessions 28 + 29 Presentation of project outcomes)

※Students are invited to make suggestions for additional focus groups.

Wrap-Up

Session 30

※ Course contents are subject to further change or revision, as needed, to best realize the educational goals of the course.

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

Mandatory and additional texts will be provided online.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Mid Term Exam 25%

Final Report 25%

Weekly Feedback Papers, Presentation and Participation 50%

※all three evaluation criteria have to be fulfilled (e.g., you cannot pass the course without submitting the final report)

Section 5

【Additional Information】

Classroom policies

1. Please come to class prepared and on time.
2. You are required to actively take part in discussions and group projects.
3. Please help create a safe and respectful classroom.
4. During class, it is inappropriate to go outside to make calls, send/read text messages, buy drinks or food, or smoke. You are not allowed to make sound or video recordings or to take pictures in class.
5. Plagiarism will not be accepted and will result in final grade F.

※ If possible, I would like to plan a field trip, e.g. to see a show at the Takarazuka Theater. Details TBA.