

Gender and Sexuality in Japan

Norms, Practice and Selves in Motion

Section 1

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【Course Outline / Description】

This course aims to explore beliefs and practices in Japan related to gender and sexuality, and how they shape the lives of people in Japan. Through the course, students will gain the conceptual, historical and cultural background for understanding long-term tendencies and dynamic changes regarding gender and sexuality within the context of Japanese society.

In exploring such gender-related phenomena, we will discuss the meanings underpinning contested ideas of femininity and masculinity, gender roles and the gendered division of labor in Japan, and issues of sexuality, reproduction, and the body. A comparative, cross-cultural perspective will be employed throughout the course, and students will be asked to reflect on their own culturally specific, gendered perspectives and positions.

Topics to be covered include: (1) the symbolic construction of gender through language, religion and popular culture images; (2) the historical background to currently dominant gender roles in Japan; (3) gender ideology, the politics of reproduction and the state; (4) socialization of gender roles; (5) family, work, and the gendered division of labor; (6) changing values and behavior at the intersection of sexuality and gender, including conjugal relations, commercialized worlds of sex, and commodification of the body; (7) sexual violence and the recent attention to the handling of rape in the Japanese criminal justice system; and (8) claims for greater inclusion of lesbian, gay and transgender people in Japan, and the dynamically shifting and contested discourses, identity work and institutional practices set forth, including struggles for marriage equality, easier access to legal recognition of gender identity, and broader protections of human rights.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

In this course, we will explore gender as cultural belief, as a social structuring mechanism and as a source of social inequality Japan, as well as issues concerning the social construction of sexuality. Students will be expected to (1) develop a critical approach to the understanding of gender- and sexuality-related phenomena; (2) acquire a deeper appreciation of the institutions and beliefs surrounding gender and sexuality in Japan, of how gender and sexuality interact with other spheres of life, and how they shape the perspectives and life course trajectories of people in Japan; and (3) through engagement with issues of gender and sexuality, critically engage with broader issues of cultural relativism, "human nature," power and social justice. Furthermore, students will (4) develop critical thinking skills through close reading and discussion of written and audio-visual materials, and (5) develop skills of expression and argumentation in both written form and oral form, through writing critical papers and class discussion and debate.

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

Schedule

Please note, sessions scheduled for Fridays in this course are in principle asynchronous, or “on-demand” sessions. They will generally involve reading, film viewing or other assignments done as homework at the student’s convenience. Occasionally, live lecture may be held at the scheduled time of those sessions for those able to attend on an optional basis. Unless otherwise stated, recordings of Zoom class sessions will be made available to class members.

• Session 1

Introduction to the course

Gender: Concepts & conflicts / Cultural relativism and the representation of others

• Session 2

Handout

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2012). Of spirals and layers. From *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World* (pp. 3-11). New York: Routledge. [BB]

• Session 3

1. White, Merry, “The Virtue of Japanese Mothers: Cultural Definitions ...”

Symbolic constructions

• Session 4

Collins, Coral (2013). “Dangerous Women: Gender Performativity in Japan and the Takarazuka Revue.” *Virginia Review of Asian Studies* 2013(1): 73-80.

3. Takahara, Kanako, “Fans make troupe phenomenon it is”

FILM: *Dream Girls* (Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams, 1993, 50 min.)

• Session 5

4. Okano, Haruko, “Women’s Image and Place in Japanese Buddhism”

5. Segawa, Kiyoko, “Menstrual Taboos Imposed upon Women”

• Session 6

6. Endo, Oriie, “Aspects of Sexism in Language”

• Session 7

7. Okamoto, Shigeko, “Ideology in Linguistic Practice and Analysis: Gender and Politeness in Japanese Revisited”

Historicizing gender

• Session 8

8. Ochiai, Emiko, “Ch. 1: Have Women Always Been Housewives?” (pp. 9-21); “The Taisho-period *Okusan*” (pp. 31-35)

10. Yamada, Masahiro, “The Housewife: A Dying Breed?”

Gender socialization

• Session 9

11. Kameda, Atsuko, “Sexism and gender stereotyping in schools”

Masculinity and femininity at work

• Session 10

- Steel, G. (2019), “Women’s work at home and in the workplace”

• Session 11

18. Ogasawara, Yuko, “Chapter 3: Gossip”

• Session 12

17. Mathews, Gordon, “Can a ‘Real Man’ Live for his Family?”

(*Opt.*: 13. Taga, Futoshi, “Rethinking Japanese Masculinities”

14. Wakamori, Taro, “Initiation Rites and Young Men’s Associations”

15. Rohlen, Thomas, “Creating the Uedagin Man”

16. Roberson, James, “Japanese Working-class Masculinities”

• Session 13

22. Mackie, Vera, “Liberation”

FILM: *Looking for Fumiko* (Nanako Kurihara, 1993, 57 min.)

• Session 14

MIDTERM EXAM

Divisions of labor: Marriage, domesticity and work-life balance

• Session 15

24. Edwards, Walter, Chapters 5, 6 from *Modern Japan through its Weddings*

WEDDING VIDEO

• Session 16

26. Nakano, Lynne, and M. Wagatsuma, “Mothers and their Unmarried Daughters: An Intimate Look at Generational Change”

FILM: *Good Wife of Tokyo* (Claire Hunt and Kim Longinotto, 1992)

• Session 17

33. Holloway, Susan D., “Husbands: Crucial Partners or Peripheral Strangers?”

• Session 18

31. Ishii-Kuntz, Masako, “Balancing Fatherhood and Work”

32. Ôta, Mutsumi, “Dad Takes Child-care Leave”

(*Opt.*: 34. Bennhold, Katrin, “In Sweden, Men Can Have It All”)

• Session 19

- Nakano, L. Y. (2011). Working and Waiting for an ‘Appropriate Person.’ In R.

Ronald and A. Alexy (Eds.), *Home and Family in Japan: Continuity and Transformation* (pp. 131-151). New York: Routledge.

• Session 20

30. Boling, Patricia, “Demography, Culture, and Policy: Understanding Japan’s Low Fertility”

Gendering sexuality

• Session 21

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

36. Ashino, Yuriko, “Long Wait for Birth Control Pills”

• Session 22

40. Takeyama, Akiko, “Commodified Romance in a Tokyo Host Club”

41. Onishi, Norimitsu, “It’s 3:30 A.M. The Off-Duty Hostesses Relax. With Hosts.”

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

• Session 23

Faier, L. (2007). Filipina migrants in rural Japan and their professions of love.” *American Ethnologist* 34 (1): 148-162.

Beyond the heteronormative: Minority gender and sexual identities

• Session 24

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

43. Summerhawk, B., “Japan’s First Homosexual Discrimination Suit”

• Session 25

Yuen, S.M. (2020). “Unqueer queers: Drinking parties and the negotiations of cultural citizenship by female-to-male trans people in Japan”

47. McLelland, Mark, “From the Stage to the Clinic”

48. *Japan Times*, (a) “Sex change recognition law enacted” (b) “Transsexuals’ SOS answered”

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

• Session 26

49. (a) Hirano, Keiji, “Transsexual assembly member on rights crusade;” (b) Hirano, Keiji, “Rikkyo lecturer to examine gender identity disorder issues”

50. American Psychiatric Association, “Gender Identity Disorder” (excerpt)

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

• Session 27

44. Kirara, “A Lesbian in Hokkaido”

FILM: *Plica-chan* (AMAMIYA Sae and UCHIDA Yoshi, 2006)

• Session 28

45. Sugiura, Ikuko, "Increasing Lesbian Visibility"
46. Kamano, Saori and Diana Khor, "Defining Lesbian Partnerships"

• Session 29

(Cont'd)

Summation and review

COURSE EVALUATION

Final exam week

FINAL IN-CLASS EXAMINATION (TBA)

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

Readings and other course materials will be available on the course Blackboard website.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Students will be evaluated on the basis of:

- (1) in-class performance, including productive participation, preparation of readings and other assignments (15%);
- (2) a brief gender reflection/commentary report (5%);
- (3) a midterm and a final in-class exam (20% x 2 = 40%); and
- (4) a thematic essay (40%) *or* two reading analysis papers (20% x 2 = 40%).

Section 5

【Additional Information】

A guest speaker may participate in our section addressing issues of legal, medical and social issues facing transgender people in Japan.