

## Sexuality and Culture in Japan

Shifting dimensions of desire, relationship and society

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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, summarized in the local media as an “LGBT Boom.” 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 and the recent movements to reform the handling of rape in the Japanese criminal justice system; and the dynamic shifts occurring as regards lesbian, gay, transgender and other minoritized sexual and gender identities and practices in Japan, including the recently imported and indigenized “LGBT” identity model, increasing recognition of same-sex partnerships and formal judicial support for marriage equality, 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, cross-cultural comparison and attention to power dynamics 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

Please note, odd-numbered sessions (“1, 3, 5 …”) are generally scheduled as asynchronous, or “on-demand” sessions. They will usually involve reading, recorded lecture or 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

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

- Session 2  
Harding, Jennifer, “Investigating Sex: Essentialism and Constructionism”
- Session 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**

- Session 4  
Edwards, Walter, Chapters 5, 6, from *Modern Japan Through Its Weddings*  
WEDDING VIDEO

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

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

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

- Session 6  
Kawahara, Yukari, “Students Outside the Classroom: Youth's Intimate Experiences in 1990s Japan”
- Session 7  
Fu, Huiyan, “The Bumpy Road to Socialise Nature: Sex Education in Japan”

- Session 8

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

- Session 9

Castro-Vázquez, Genaro, “Shotgun weddings (*dekichatta kekkon*) in contemporary Japan”

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

- Session 10

Kelsky, Karen, “Gender, Modernity, and Eroticized Internationalism in Japan”

- Session 11

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.)

- Session 12

MIDTERM EXAM

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

- Session 13

Onozawa, A., “The ‘comfort women’ and State Prostitution”

Hane, Mikiso, “Poverty and Prostitution”

- Session 14

Oh, Bonnie B. C., “The Japanese Imperial System and the Korean ‘Comfort Women’ of World War II”

Kingston, Jeff, “Continuing Controversy of ‘comfort women’”

- Session 15

Yoshimi, Y., “The Kōno Statement: Its historical significance and limitations”

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

- Session 16

Group Sisterhood, “Prostitution, Stigma, and the Law in Japan”

- Session 17

Ho, Swee Lin, “‘Playing Like Men’: The Extramarital Experiences of Women in Contemporary Japan”

### **Sexual harassment and violence in Japan**

- Session 18

Rich, M., “She Broke Japan’s Silence on Rape”

Ito, S., “Saying #MeToo in Japan”

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

• Session 19

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

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.)

• Session 20

Gagné, Nana Okura, "Feeling like a Man': Managing Gender, Sexuality, and Corporate Life in After-Hours Tokyo"

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

• Session 21

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

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

• Session 22

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

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

• Session 23

Tamagawa, Masami, "Coming Out of the Closet in Japan: An Exploratory Sociological Study"

### **Lesbian experiences**

• Session 24

Kirara, "A Lesbian in Hokkaido"

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

• Session 25

Tsubuku, Masako, "Assemblywoman puts sex on the agenda"

Sawabe, Hitomi, "The Symbolic Tree of Lesbianism in Japan"

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

### **Transgender identities and medical and legal frameworks**

• Session 26

McLelland, Mark, "From the Stage to the Clinic: Changing Transgender Identities in Post-war Japan"

"Sex law recognition law enacted"/"Transsexuals' SOS answered"

• Session 27

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

Norton, Laura H., “Neutering the Transgendered: Human Rights and Japan’s Law  
No. 111”

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

• Session 28

Hirano, Keiji, “Transsexual assembly member...”

“School accepts lad...”/“Divorcees with gender disorder...”

Kameya, Yuzuru and Yoshihiro Narita, “A Clinical and Psycho-Sociological Case  
Study on Gender Identity Disorder in Japan”

American Psychiatric Association, “Gender Identity Disorder”

“Appendix: The International Bill of Gender Rights”

American Psychiatric Association, “Gender Dysphoria”

### **Marriage equality and sexual citizenship**

• Session 29

Tamagawa, Masami, “Same-Sex Marriage in Japan”

• Session 30

Tang, D., Khor, D. and Chen, Y., “Legal Recognition of same-sex partnerships: A  
comparative study of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan”

Review and concluding remarks

### **Final exam week**

FINAL EXAMINATION (TBA)

#### **【Textbooks/Reading Materials】**

Course readings and other 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 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 reflection essay (5%).

#### **Section 5**

##### **【Additional Information】**

A guest speaker may be scheduled for the section of the course addressing issues of  
transgender identity in Japan or some other course-related topic.