EAST 369 Gender and Sexuality in Asian Media: Japan

Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:35PM - 5:55PM (see schedule for details. Online)
Instructor: Edmond (Ed) ERNEST DI ALBAN (They / Their)
Email: edmond.ernestdalban@mcgill.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 1pm-2pm (Please make an appointment for Zoom)

Course Objectives
This course offers a comprehensive examination of the various historical debates surrounding gender and sexual dynamics in Japanese society from Meiji era to the late 2010s. We will consider a wide range of topics including the construction of masculinity, the transformation of feminist discourses and the struggles of LGBTQ+ minorities. Our goal is to progressively map the key notions of contemporaneous gender studies while looking back at the sociopolitical transformations faced by Japan in the past decades. With this class students will be familiarized with 1) basic knowledge about Japanese Social, Political and Cultural histories, 2) key concepts in Gender Studies, 3) tools to analyze media texts. Critical distance with current scholarship will nevertheless be implied by relocating these debates in their original historical and cultural context. As such, we will pay attention to cultural projects, gender performances, media production and social movements that have shaped the discourses and lived experiences of Japanese gender and sexuality. We will adopt non-essentialist definitions of our “Japanese” objects as well as a critical posture with the mobilized notions: students will be asked to critically engage with the material to draw parallels with global debates on the definitions of gender and sexuality.

Course Structure and Methodology
The semester will follow a semi-chronological perspective. The first 3 weeks will build a common set of notions and academic knowledge that we will expend through the observation of the three following themes: Masculinity, Feminism and Queer lives. Each theme will be explored chronologically. From the Meiji era to post-war Japan we will question the construction of the modern state and its effects on gendered conditions and sexual practices. From the 70s to the Late 2010s we will question the ruptures in identities, social activism and media production following the students’ movements, the so-called economic crisis, as well as the decentralization and neoliberalization of Japan. Class materials will be in English, clips and films will have subtitles.

Required Readings
Excerpts from books and full academic essays will be provided as an entry point to each week’s subject matter, please access class materials from MyCourses. Readings are fundamental to both class discussions and assignments and should not be overlooked. Students must keep up with readings in order to prepare for class discussions and class activities, as well as for written assignments submitted via MyCourses. They should complete all required readings, as assigned each week prior to the start of the next week’s class. They should also keep up with screenings, lecture notes, power point slides, and any other material posted or handed out in class in order to adequately prepare for assignments. Workshops on zoom are part of class.

Media
Class discussion will focus on screenings; each week we will watch a few short clips from episodes and films or read additional texts to analyze material in class prior to assignments. Screenings are an important part of class and should not be skipped.

Course Requirements and Grading Breakdown
A Attendance and Participation (10%)
B Weekly Diary (20%)
C Analysis of a representation (20%)
D Final Project Proposal (10%)
E Final Project (40%)

A - Attendance and Participation (10%)
This class requires regular attendance to workshops and active participation. Since the term will be online the following adjustments will be made. Participation points will reward questions and interventions about readings online on Discussion Forums on Mycourses and Active participation during Workshops every Thursday on Zoom. (See schedule below). Examples: ask about something that was unclear to you, say what you think about the readings.

Forum posts may include one of the following; questions, comments about the readings, a media you want to share with the class to discuss a point made in class.

Active participation to class - including your contribution to discussions or other activities in class - is essential and will be marked. Active participation reveals your familiarity with course material: so, come to class prepared to ask questions and volunteer comments about readings and films. If you do not understand an idea, a term or a concept, please let us know; asking for clarification makes you a good student and also helps your fellow classmates. Looking at what others asked may also provide an answer.

B - Weekly Diary (20%)  
To encourage students to actively apply the knowledge and skills we learn in class, students will submit every week their thoughts on how the themes of the previous week resonates with the news, recent films and TV shows or current social debates. Choose ONE notion and apply it to a current situation. Only a paragraph is need (Max 8 lines), drawings and other creative formats are also welcomed. This diary is the place to freely express ideas, questions and potential debates for class and later assignments.

C - Analysis of a representation (20%) Due Oct 18th 2020
The first written assignment is very straightforward; students will have to handout a short three-page analysis of a gendered or sexual representation reflecting on a topic discussed in weeks 1 to 5. A successful assignment will engage with 1) analyzing the kind of representation 2) media specifities 3) social commentators. Using readings and class discussion will be essential to develop one short yet critical idea that can be continued in the final project. The main goal is to structure and develop your argumentation explaining why and how you approach gendered and sexual representations in Japan. Further information will be provided in class during discussions. This is a “take home exams”. Students will have two weeks to write and submit on MyCourses.

D - Final Project Proposal (10%) Due November 3rd 2020
Students will provide a proposal for the final project. Proposal must include the following. A clear topic (what is going to be analyzed?). A clear method (how is the topic analyzed?). A clear structure (what elements are important and in which order should they be discussed?). For art projects a small description and justification is needed. This is a “take home exams”. Students will have two weeks to write and submit on MyCourses.

E - Final Project (40%) Due December 15th 2020
Final projects may take multiple forms; an academic essay, a video-essay or an artistic creation. All formats must follow these instructions: choose one topic seen in class in between weeks 1 to 12, find one novel, film or other media, use at least 2 readings from class and 1 extra source to address the inscription of the chosen material within the discussion of gender and sexuality in Japanese History. Papers should be in between 8 and 12 pages long (including bibliography) and video-essays at least 6 minutes long. Both video-essays and artistic projects must come with a 3-page proposal explaining in detail how this creation engages with the readings and the historical context of the chosen piece. This is a “take home exams”. Students will have a few weeks to write and submit on MyCourses.

Writing guidelines
The work must be type-written and double-spaced, using a Times New Roman 12 points font. Correct citation is essential. Use endnotes where necessary and cite all your sources in an accompanying bibliography. Failure to do so could constitute plagiarism, which is a serious academic offence (see section below). Work handed in without such documentation will be returned unmarked and will be subject to late penalties. There are several citation references guides available, most of which are accessible through the library’s website.

The Modern Languages Association (MLA) guideline is commonly used in film studies and the humanities in general, but if you wish to use another set of guidelines (e.g. APA, Chicago, etc.) you may do so. You must however stick to one citation style throughout the full assignment. Please feel free to consult your instructor at any time if you are experiencing difficulty in completing course assignments.
**Important Notes**

The most common offence under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement” (Article 16a). Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying where you obtained it! Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism. We remind you that plagiarism is a serious offence that can lead to expulsion from the University.

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, **including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations**. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.”

**Classroom Environment and Complaints**

This class is a safe space for anyone to speak freely. Students from any academic background, minorities and disabilities have their right place in the discussion and multiple points of views are welcomed! Any questions, concerns, or complaints related to class material and classroom environment should be first discussed with the course instructor, who will make every effort to address them. Some of the visual and written material for this class contains explicit nudity and/or depiction of sexual acts. There is material that deals with issues of sexism, heterosexism, homosexuality, and racial or ethnic stereotypes. All material is part of the course’s focus and should therefore be considered from an analytic, rather than a moral or ethical perspective

**Weekly Schedule**

**When you can:**

- Students may participate on the Discussion Forum on Mycourse to get participation points

  **Tuesday:**

  - Lecture is posted online at 12 pm

  - Diaries are due on Tuesday before 12pm

  **Thursdays:**

  - Online Zoom meeting with the class from 4:35 to 5:35 for a weekly workshop

**Weekly breakdown**

**Introduction classes**

**How to study Gender and Sexual History in Japan?**
Week 1:

**Mapping the Notions: What is the Field of Gender and Sexuality**

*History Studies like in Japan?*


**Notions:**
- Masculinity/Femininity
- Gender, Sex, Sexuality
- Political History, Social History, Cultural History
- Intersectionality

**Workshop:** Creating a preliminary map with key notions

Week 2:

**The invention of Boys and Girls: Nation, Education and Early Gender Politics in Modern Japan**


**Notions:**
- Boy/Girl/Child
- Nation and Modern State
- Subject-Citizen

**Workshop:** Media analysis of Shônen Club and its repercussion on the gender dynamics of later TV shows

Week 3:

**A quick history of Public Health, Sexual Education and the Porn Industry in Japan**


**Notions:**
- Sexology
- Sexual Education
- Pornography

**Workshop:** Discussion of Sex-Ed materials and other forms of explicit media **Trigger warning: Pornography**

Section 1

**Masculinity: 1868-2000s**

Week 4:

Boys will be...Murderers? Discipline, rebellion and criminology


**Notions**
- Seishônen/ Youth
- Kenzen/ “Healthy”
- “Warumono” or “bad boy”

**Workshop:** Media analysis of the “bad boy” figure across multiple representations

**Week 5: Salaryman masculinities and Male Homosociality**


**Notions**
- Salaryman
- Corporate masculinity and “Ikigai”

**Workshop:** Media analysis of male labor

**Week 6:**

**Identity Crisis or Self Discovery? Herbivores, Otakus and Alternative Male Heterosexuality**


**Notions:**
- Herbivore Masculinity (Sôshoku-kei)
- Otaku
- Commodification

**Workshop:** Discussion about the commodification of masculinity

**Section 2**

**Japanese Feminisms: 1868-2010s**

**Week 7:**

**“Whores or Moms, Brothels or Homes”: The binary geographies of the modern feminine condition**


**Notions:**
- Mother/Prostitute
- Public sphere, Private Sphere
- Homosociality in Modern State

**Workshop:** Social Analysis of Street Of Shame (Mizoguchi Kenji, 1956)
Week 8:

First waves of Feminism(s): From Meiji’s Seito to Post war’s “liberation from the toilet”


Notions:
- Feminism
- (Im)morality

Workshop: How to do research on feminism?

Week 9:

Post-Feminisms: National Media Bashing, Consumerist Empowerment and Underground Subcultures


Notions:
- Post-Feminism
- Consumerism
- Otome/ Maiden

Workshop: Media mapping of post-feminist subcultures

Section 3

LGBT Movements and Queer Lives: 1945-2020

Week 10:

“S” and “Gei boi”: the reworking of homosexual identities


Notions:
- Homosexuality
- Queer
- LGBTQ+? LGBTI? LGBT?

Workshop: Film Analysis of *Black Lizard* (Fukasaku Kinji, 1968)

Week 11:

Cool Queers: Consumerism as “Intersectionality” during the 90s’ Gay Boom


Sakamoto (eds), Routledge, 2006.

Notions:
- Cultural appropriation
- Commodification
- Subcultures

Workshop: Media creation on queerbating

Week 12:

It's not just about toilets! Transgender lives in contemporary Japan


Notions:
- Transgender lives
- Agency (Bodily, Political)

Workshop: TBA

Week 13:

Gay manga just did this? Gengoroh Tagame, manga activism and the recent partnership movement


Notions:
- Manga Activism
- Marriage equality
- Infra politics (Foucault)