

EAST 370
Marianne Tarcov
History of Sexuality in Japan

marianne.tarcov@mcgill.ca

Office hours: Monday 2:00-3:00pm, 680 Sherbrooke room 276 or by appointment

Course description

This course explores the social and cultural history of sexuality in Japan. We will pay particular attention to portrayals of sexuality in literature, media, and popular culture in Japan to see how sexuality is culturally perceived and constructed.

The course is divided into thematic units that explore different aspects of sexuality. We begin with a unit on sexuality's relationship to human freedom on the one hand and oppression on the other. When does sexuality disrupt or subvert social norms, and when does it enforce them? We then move through a series of units on representation, including what it means to write and read sexuality through language, and what it means to visualize it in various forms of media. We will close with a pair of units on the political dimensions of sexuality: its implication in constructions of the nation in Japan, and its potential to imagine futures beyond the human in the sci-fi novel *Hybrid Child* by Ōhara Mariko.

We will consider key questions including: what is the relationship between sexuality, repression, and social control? When is sexuality associated with state power, and when is it associated with popular liberation? The course title and conceptual framework are heavily inspired by the work of French theorist Michel Foucault. We will also consider, what does it mean to study sexuality in a non-Western context, and how do we as McGill scholars and students avoid neo-colonial frameworks of understanding?

Course objectives

This course equips students to do scholarly research on topics of sexuality in the field of Japanese studies. It introduces key themes and debates in the secondary literature in this field.

The course also includes primary sources in Japanese literature, media, and popular culture related to sexuality. Students will practice their close reading skills with regards to cultural products related to sexuality in Japan.

Ultimately, the course will encourage students to weave together arguments based in scholarly literature and close readings of primary sources in their own original research projects.

Evaluation

Participation 10%
Reading Responses (10x) 20%
Midterm Paper: 25%
Final paper proposal: 10%
Final Paper 35%

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.

Participation

Please complete all assigned readings before coming to class and be prepared to participate thoughtfully and actively in class discussion. Please note that active, respectful listening to both the instructor and the other students is an essential part of class participation.

Reading Responses

Please post your 3-4 paragraph response on MyCourses before 10pm the night before our class meets.

For primary sources, choose a brief passage from the reading and formulate a discussion question inspired by it. Your discussion question should focus on ambiguity or multivalence within the text: what does it make you notice, feel, think, or wonder? What elements of your passage would you like to discuss further in class?

For secondary sources, briefly recap the author's argument in your first paragraph. Then, respond to this argument from your own point of view. What are its implications for your own work as a student, researcher, and writer?

The readings will vary between primary and secondary sources.

Midterm Paper

length: 4-6 pages double-spaced size 12 font

due: Fri. Mar. 1

More information will be available later in the semester.

Final paper proposal

length: 2 pages double spaced size 12 font

due: Tues. Apr. 2

More information will be available later in the semester.

Final Paper

length: 5-8 pages double-spaced, size 12 font

due: Monday April 22

More information will be available later in the semester.

Early Drafts

Unfortunately, I cannot look over early drafts of any written assignments.

Email Policy

Please allow time before you receive a response. Email is recommended for short, concrete questions and concerns. For matters requiring more substantive discussion, such as brainstorming or help with essays or other assignments, office hours or an appointment are recommended.

Content Notes and Warnings

Many materials we study will include graphic or upsetting content, much of it related to sexuality. I will provide content notes and warnings as best as I am able. One complication is that this is the first time I am teaching this course, and I have never taught most of the materials before. It's possible I will miss some places where content notes and warnings are necessary.

I encourage students to do their own research with regards to individual sensitivities and needs. Wikipedia summaries are great for this.

Academic Integrity

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).

For this course, representing as one's own idea any thought that was AI-generated may be considered an academic honesty offence.

Books

Two books are available for purchase at LeJames Bookstore. You are also welcome to source them elsewhere if that is cheaper or more convenient.

Other editions, including alternate translations or electronic editions, are fine. Please understand that if you use another edition or translation, it may be a little tricky to follow page numbers in class discussion.

If obtaining the books is a financial hardship, please contact me.

Natsume Sōseki, *Kokoro*, trans. Meredith McKinney (New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 2010).

Ōhara Mariko, *Hybrid Child*, trans. Jodie Beck (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

Schedule

Mon. Jan. 8

Introductory materials

clips: *Eijanaika*, Imamura Shōhei, 1981

Liberation and repression

Wed. Jan. 10

Rio Otomo, "Politics of Utopia: Fantasy, Pornography, and Boys' Love," in *Boys' Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan*, ed. Mark McLelland, Kazumi Nagaike, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 141-152.

Mon. Jan. 15

Leith Morton, Introduction and Chapter 5, in *How Dark is My Flower: Yosano Akiko and the Invention of Romantic Love* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2023), 1-25 and 152-168.

Wed. Jan. 17

Akiko Takeyama, "Introduction: Promise of the Future" in *Staged Seduction: Selling Dreams in a Tokyo Host Club* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 1-23.

Mon. Jan. 22

Sonia Ryang, Introduction and Chapter 1 "Sacred Sex," in *Love and Modern Japan: Its Estrangement from Self, Sex, and Society* (London, UK: Routledge, 2006), 1-9 and 9-35.

Sexuality, Reading, and Writing:

Wed. Jan. 24

Sachi Schmidt Hori, "Introduction: Becoming a Chigo," in *Tales of Idolized Boys: Male-male Love in Medieval Japanese Buddhist Narratives* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2021), 1-40.

Mon. Jan. 29

Reginald Jackson, Preface and Introduction, in *A Proximate Remove: Queering Intimacy and Loss in The Tale of Genji* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021), xiii-xxii and 1-31.

Wed. Jan. 31

Yoshiya Nobuko, *Yellow Rose*, trans. Sarah Frederick (Expanded Editions, 2016), 1-29.

Deborah Shamoon, Introduction, in *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls' Culture in Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), 1-13.

Mon. Feb. 5

Kokoro

Wed. Feb. 7

Kokoro

Mon. Feb. 12

Kokoro

Wed. Feb. 14

Kokoro

Mon. Feb 19

Hamao Shirō, *The Devil's Disciple*, trans. J. Keith Vincent (Hesperus Books, 2011).

Note: Only the first novella. No page numbers.

Visualizing Sexuality in media

Wed. Feb. 21

Timon Screech, Introduction and Chapter 3, in *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan 1700-1820* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 1999), 9-15 and 92-133.

content warning: explicit images

Mon. Feb. 26

Miryam Sas, "Pink Feminism? The Program Pictures of Hamano Sachi," in *The Pink Book*, ed. Abe Markus Nornes (Kinejapan Publications, 2014), 295-329.

Wed. Feb. 28

in class screening: TBD

Note: I am trying to track down one of Hamano Sachi's films for us to watch. It may be explicit. As we will discuss in class, much of her work is pink film, which is soft-core pornography. Please contact me if you need accommodation.

Fri. Mar. 1 Midterm paper due

Mon. Mar. 4 no class

Wed. Mar. 6 no class

Mon. Mar. 11

Kirsten Seuffert, "Exploding Girls, Imploding Strategies: Media-Mixed Bodies in Late 1970s to 1980s Japanese Women's Professional Wrestling, *Mechademia: Second Arc*, Volume 16, Number 1 (Winter 2023): 59-78.

Note: class will meet remotely on this date to accommodate our guest speaker, Kirsten Seuffert herself! Zoom details to follow.

Sexuality and the nation

Wed. Mar. 13

Gregory Pflugfelder, Chapter 5, in *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse 1600-1950* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 235-286.

Mon. Mar. 18

Jennifer Robertson, Introduction, in *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 1-24.

Karen Nakamura, "Takarazuka," *Visual Anthropology*, 17 (2004): 205-207.

Wed. Mar. 20

Sabine Fruhstuck, Chapter 4 "Sex at War," in *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 98-121.

content warning: war atrocities, rape, sexual violence

Sexuality and imagined futures

Mon. Mar. 25
Hybrid Child

Wed. Mar. 27
in-class activity, co-working, flex day

Mon. Apr. 1 no class

Tues. Apr. 2 Paper proposal due

Wed. Apr. 3
Hybrid Child

Mon. Apr. 8
Hybrid Child

Wed. Apr. 10
Hybrid Child

Thurs. Apr. 11 Monday schedule
Hybrid Child, wrapup

Mon. Apr. 22 Final paper due