



JPNS3021

Social Issues in Contemporary Japan

Session 2, Online-flexible 2023

Department of Media, Communications, Creative Arts, Language and Literature

Contents

<u>General Information</u>	2
<u>Learning Outcomes</u>	2
<u>General Assessment Information</u>	3
<u>Assessment Tasks</u>	4
<u>Delivery and Resources</u>	6
<u>Unit Schedule</u>	7
<u>Policies and Procedures</u>	12

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Convener

Wes Robertson

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Contact via Email

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

130cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit explores various issues in contemporary Japanese society, investigating how Japanese people navigate these issues and develop strategies of support and resistance to structural inequalities. Through engaging with authentic Japanese media texts and scholarship, students to develop critical analytical skills to identify and articulate the role of culture in the production of social issues in Japan. The unit is divided into four "modules": 1) Precarious Japan, 2) Gender and Sexuality, 3) Ethnic Minorities, and 4) Japan in the World. Topics covered include: cultural dynamics of the contemporary family; politics and civil society; economic cycles of boom and stress; environmental issues and tipping points; the pathway to adulthood; reconstructions of gender, Japanese sexual minority cultures; ethnic difference and communities; minorities and social peripheries; and Japan's place in the broader world.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Demonstrate detailed knowledge of a wide range of aspects of Japanese culture and society by drawing upon authentic Japanese media texts and scholarship.

ULO2: Develop competence in research, including independently locating appropriate

sources in Japanese and English, developing a theoretical argument, and communicating results in an efficient manner.

ULO3: Generate reasoned, considered and original analysis and evaluation of authentic Japanese media texts, both orally and in writing.

ULO4: Present information in a clear, focused, and well-structured manner, both orally and in writing

ULO5: Demonstrate a high level of intercultural communicative competence through class participation and engagement with authentic Japanese media texts.

General Assessment Information

General Assessment Information

Late Submissions, Extensions and Supplementary Tests

Assessment tasks are compulsory and must be submitted on time. If you anticipate unavoidable difficulty in completing an assessment task (in class and/or online), contact the convener or your tutor as soon as possible.

Late Assessment Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, **a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted**, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.

This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (incl essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). **Late submission of time sensitive tasks** (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) **will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.**

Special Consideration

If a student is prevented by serious and unavoidable disruption from completing unit requirements in accordance with their ability, they may apply for support under the Special Consideration Policy. To access this support, students must notify the university via [ask.mq.edu](https://ask.mq.edu.au) [u.au](https://ask.mq.edu.au). Students should refer to the Policy for further information (see the link provided in the 'Policies and procedures' section of this unit guide).

Examples of Assessment Tasks

Indicative examples of assessment tasks will be available in class and/or iLearn.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Essay Proposal	20%	No	17:00, 25/8/22
Research Essay	45%	No	17:00, 3/11/22
Module Quizzes	20%	No	23:59, 20/8/22; 10/9/22; 15/10/22; 5/11/22
Participation	15%	No	Ongoing

Essay Proposal

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **17:00, 25/8/22**

Weighting: **20%**

Students will propose a small analytical research project related to one of the unit modules. Proposal will be submitted online.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of a wide range of aspects of Japanese culture and society by drawing upon authentic Japanese media texts and scholarship.
- Develop competence in research, including independently locating appropriate sources in Japanese and English, developing a theoretical argument, and communicating results in an efficient manner.
- Generate reasoned, considered and original analysis and evaluation of authentic Japanese media texts, both orally and in writing.
- Present information in a clear, focused, and well-structured manner, both orally and in writing

Research Essay

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **17:00, 3/11/22**

Weighting: **45%**

Students will research and write an argumentative analytical essay based on the project which they have proposed. Essay will be submitted online.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of a wide range of aspects of Japanese culture and society by drawing upon authentic Japanese media texts and scholarship.
- Develop competence in research, including independently locating appropriate sources in Japanese and English, developing a theoretical argument, and communicating results in an efficient manner.
- Generate reasoned, considered and original analysis and evaluation of authentic Japanese media texts, both orally and in writing.
- Present information in a clear, focused, and well-structured manner, both orally and in writing

Module Quizzes

Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **23:59, 20/8/22; 10/9/22; 15/10/22; 5/11/22**

Weighting: **20%**

Online multiple choice quizzes assessing students' knowledge of each module's key ideas and themes

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of a wide range of aspects of Japanese culture and society by drawing upon authentic Japanese media texts and scholarship.
- Generate reasoned, considered and original analysis and evaluation of authentic Japanese media texts, both orally and in writing.

Participation

Assessment Type ¹: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 13 hours

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **15%**

Students are required to actively participate in all activities

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Generate reasoned, considered and original analysis and evaluation of authentic Japanese media texts, both orally and in writing.
- Present information in a clear, focused, and well-structured manner, both orally and in writing
- Demonstrate a high level of intercultural communicative competence through class participation and engagement with authentic Japanese media texts.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

The class is divided into four "modules" of three weeks each, The Modules are:

- 1) Precarious Japan
- 2) Gender and Sexuality
- 3) Ethnic Minorities
- 4) Japan in the World

Each teaching week, there will be a one hour recorded lecture that students must engage with. Students enrolled into Fully Virtual/Online mode will also participate in an asynchronous online discussion forum each week. This discussion forum will be mostly **student led**, with the teaching staff primarily acting as a facilitator of student discussion, as well as assessing each students' participation.

Each lecture will cover the broader theoretical themes of the week, whereas the weekly forum discussions will focus on each week's required readings. It will be essential that students complete the required readings **before each week's lecture**. A summary of each week's major themes may be found in iLearn and in the Unit Guide (under Unit Schedule).

This unit has an online presence.

Login is via: <https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/>

Is my unit in iLearn?: <http://help.ilearn.mq.edu.au/unitsonline/> to check when your online unit will become available.

Technology

Students are required to have regular access to a computer and the internet. Mobile devices alone are not sufficient. This is particularly true for online tests (to be conducted at home).

Students are required to access the online unit in iLearn by the end of Week 1 and follow any relevant instructions and links for downloads that may be required.

- For central technical support go to: http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/
- For student quick guides on the use of iLearn go to: <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/tools-and-resources/ilearn/ilearn-quick-guides-for-students>

Unit Schedule

Below is the unit schedule, including the topics and required readings for each week. All the required readings will be made available via iLearn **from Week 1**. Students are encouraged to read ahead in order to prepare for the various assessment tasks.

Introduction

Week 1: What is “Japanese Studies”?

In this introductory lecture, we will explore the scholarly tradition of Japanese Studies to understand how different scholars in different periods approached and understood Japanese society. These disciplinary discussions are crucial for understanding the rest of the content we will be discussing in each of the modules. We will also explore the Assessments of the Unit, as well as briefly discuss contemporary Japan's demographic situation.

Essential Reading (by Week 2)

1. Sugimoto, Y. 2014. Japanese Society: Inside out and outside in. *International Sociology*. 29 (3): 191–208.

Module 1: Precarious Japan

Week 2: Social precariousness after the “Lost Decades”

In the introductory lecture for Module 1: Precarious Japan, we will firstly discuss the important sociological concepts of structure and agency to contextualise our understandings of Japanese society. We will then discuss the postwar economic and social development of Japan, focussing upon the increasing neoliberalisation of Japanese society after the collapse of the Bubble Economy of the 1980s. In discussing the so-called Lost Decades (1990s & 2000s), we will focus upon the trope of precarity/precariousness to investigate contemporary social disadvantage. We will place a particular focus on Japan's declining birthrate and its effects on Japanese society.

Essential Reading

1. Allison, A. 2013. *Precarious Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 1–42.
2. Shirahase, S. 2015. Demography as destiny: Falling birthrates and the allure of a blended society. In Baldwin, F. & Allison, A. (eds). *Japan: The Precarious Future*. New York, NYU Press, pp. 11–35.

Week 3: Youth responses to changing employment and social withdrawal

In the second lecture of Module 1: Precarious Japan, we will focus our discussions more closely on changing conditions of employment and their effects on young people in Japan. We will begin by discussing the development of ideals of life-long employment in postwar Japanese society, and then discuss how the casualisation of the workforce since the Koizumi administration has adversely affected youths in Japan. Drawing upon our understandings of social precarity, structure, and agency, we will examine a number of youth subcultures which have emerged in reaction to the casualisation of the workforce, including the freeter, NEET, *sōshoku danshi* and *hikikomori* phenomena.

Essential Reading

1. Genda, Y. 2007. Jobless youths and the NEET problem in Japan. *Social Science Japan Journal*. 10 (1): 23–44.
2. Furlong, A. 2008. The Japanese hikikomori problem: Acute social withdrawal among young people. *Sociological Review*. 56 (2): 309–325.

Week 4: On the margins: Disability in Japan

In the final lecture for Module 1: Precarious Japan, we will examine what it means to exist on the margins of a society, with a specific focus on disability and mental illness in contemporary Japan. As background, we will chart the history of medicine in Japan, with a particular focus on the influence of Shinto notions of purity on contemporary attitudes towards the differently-abled. Through our reading, we will then investigate governmental attempts to create a "barrier free" society that supports the integration of the differently-abled into society, as well as discussing some of the failures of such policies. A significant focus will be placed on disability rights activism in Japan and on understanding how differently-abled individuals and groups exercise their agency to advocate for change in Japanese society.

Essential Reading

1. Stevens, C. S. 2007. Living with Disability in Urban Japan. *Japanese Studies*. 27 (3): 263–278.
2. Nakamura, K. 2009. Disability, destitution, and disaster: Surviving the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake in Japan. *Human Organization*. 68 (1): 82–88.

Module 2: Gender and Sexuality

Week 5: Is Japanese masculinity in crisis?

In the introductory lecture of the Module 2: Gender and Sexuality, we will move from our focus on

the neoliberalisation of Japanese society to examine contemporary debates concerning masculinity in Japan. We will begin by tracing the various historical ideologies of masculinity in Japan and explore how they are linked to notions of employment and fatherhood as embodied in the figures of the *kigyô senshi* and *daikokubashira*. We will then turn to discuss emerging masculine youth cultures in post-Bubble Japan which challenge such ideologies, including the *sôshoku danshi*, the newly emerging *jendâresu danshi*, and male *otaku*. Throughout, we will reflect upon the role of heteronormativity in structuring notions of Japanese masculinity, as well as the construction of "hegemonic" masculinities.

Essential Reading

1. Mathews, G. 2014. Being a man in a Strained Japan: The view from twenty years later. In Kawano, S., Roberts, G. S. & Orpett Long, S. (eds). *Capturing Contemporary Japan: Differentiation and Uncertainty*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 60–80.
2. Slater, D. H & Galbraith, P. 2011. Re-narrating social class and masculinity in neoliberal Japan: An examination of the media coverage of the 'Akihabara Incident' of 2008. *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*. 11 (3). Available at: <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/2011/SlaterGalbraith.html>.

Week 6: Historical feminisms in contemporary Japan

In the second lecture of Module 2: Gender and Sexuality, we will trace the historical development of feminist movements in Japan in order to understand the changing roles of women in Japanese society. Before examining the history of feminism in Japan, we will examine some of the ideologies of womanhood which have been dominant in Japan, including *ryôsai kenbo* and the *yamato nadeshiko*. We will then examine how feminist groups have challenged such notions, placing a particular emphasis on the role of women in postwar Japan's politics. We will end the discussion by investigating young women's sub-cultural subversions of hegemonic femininity, including the gothic lolita fashion community. Important to these discussions are how women exercise their agency within patriarchal social structures.

Essential Reading

1. Kano, A. 2011. Backlash, fight back, and back-peddalling: Responses to state feminism in Contemporary Japan. *International Journal of Asian Studies*. 8 (1): 41–62.
2. Dalton, E. 2017. Womenomics, 'equality' and Abe's neo-liberal strategy to make Japanese women shine. *Social Science Japan Journal*. 20 (1): 95-105.

Week 7: Japan's LGBT communities: Historical trajectories

In the final lecture of Module 2: Gender and Sexuality, we will explore the historical trajectories of Japan's diverse LGBT communities. We will begin by focussing upon Japanese historical understandings of (male) homosexuality, charting the changing representations of sexual minorities in Japanese media. We will place a particular emphasis on the historical development of Japanese terminology for discussing sexual minorities in the Japanese postwar context. We will then explore the postwar histories of Japan's gay male and lesbian communities, with a

particular focus placed upon the historical role of activism within these communities. We will finish by reflecting upon the positioning of LGBT groups in Japan from the perspective of social precarity, and explore recent debates in Japanese government concerning the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation for LGBT communities.

Essential Reading

1. Maree, C. 2014 Queer women's culture and history in Japan. In McLelland, M. & Mackie, V. (eds). *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 230–244.
2. McLelland, M. & Sukanuma, K. 2009. Sexual minorities and human rights in Japan: An historical perspective. *The International Journal of Human Rights*. 13 (2–3): 329–343.

Module 3: Ethnic minorities in Japan

Week 8: *Gaijin*, blackness and ethnic stereotypes in Japan

In this introductory lecture for Module 3: Ethnic Minorities, we will move our focus to understanding historical and contemporary patterns of immigration to Japan as well as thinking through the various stereotypes of "foreigners" to be found in Japanese media. After discussing the differences between nationality, race and ethnicity (with a focus on Japanese understandings of such concepts), we will investigate media representations of *gaijin* (white foreigners) and black (African, African American, and Afro-Caribbean) individuals and groups in contemporary Japan. We will place a strong focus throughout this module on problematising notions of Japan as an ethnically and linguistically homogeneous society through a critical investigation of *nihonjinron*.

Essential Reading

1. Hambleton, A. 2011. Reinforcing identities? Non-Japanese residents, television and cultural nationalism in Japan. *Contemporary Japan*. 23 (2011): 27–47.
2. Capobianco, P. 2015. Confronting diversity: Africans challenging Japanese societal convictions. *Contemporary Japan*. 27 (2): 189–212.

Week 9: Ethnic Koreans in Japan

In the second lecture of Module 3: Ethnic Minorities, we will examine the history of the *zainichi kankokujin*, the long-term ethnic Korean minority living in Japan. As well as tracing the historical trajectory of this ethnic group, our discussions of *zainichi* communities will touch upon the contemporary socio-political relationships between Japan, South Korea, and North Korea in the postwar era. We will examine the contentious issue of ethnic discrimination and hate speech in the Japanese context through a discussion of a right-wing group known as *Zaitokukai* (Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Zainichi) who have often come into conflict with local governments due to their anti-Korean rhetoric. Finally, we will examine what impact the "Korean Wave" has had on Japan-Korean relationships.

Essential Reading

1. Itagaki, R. 2015. The anatomy of Korea-phobia in Japan. *Japanese Studies*. 35 (1):

49–66.

2. Iwabuchi, K. 2008. When the Korean Wave meets resident Koreans in Japan: Intersections of the transnational, the postcolonial, and the multicultural. In Chua, B. H. & Iwabuchi, K. (eds). *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 243-264.

Week 10: Chinese migration to Japan: Education, leisure, and sex

In the final lecture of Module 3: Ethnic Minorities, we will turn our attention to Japan's largest ethnic group, the Chinese. In particular, we will focus our discussion on educationally-channeled migrants from the People's Republic of China as a site to discuss the ambiguities surrounding Japanese understandings of the Chinese people as both a national group and as a "race". We will chart the historical trajectory of discourses of Chineseness in Japanese society, thinking through such terms as *kakyo*, *shinajin* and *furyō chūgokujin*. The lecture will conclude with a discussion of the intersections of ethnicity and sexuality, linking discussions had in Module 2 to our discussions of ethnicity, by focussing upon gay Chinese tourists' experiences of xenophobia in Japan.

Essential Reading

1. Coates, J. 2015. "Unseeing" Chinese Students in Japan: Understanding educationally channelled migrant experiences. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*. 44 (3): 125–154.
2. Baudinette, T. 2016. Ethnosexual frontiers in queer Tokyo: The construction of racialized desire in Japan. *Japan Forum*. 28 (4): 465–485.

Module 4: Japan in the world

Week 11: History debates in East Asia: The Yasukuni Controversy

In this introductory lecture to Module 4: Japan in the World, we move our focus away from solely looking at Japanese society within a domestic context and broaden some of our discussions to consider Japan's situatedness within the world. We begin by thinking through Japan's relationships with its East Asian neighbours. Important to this discussion is an understanding of the role of wartime history on contemporary Japanese international relations. We will discuss how various sociologists and historians understand Japan as a "continually postwar" society. As a case study, we examine the various controversies surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo as a way to explore the contested nature of war memorialisation. We will also look at how the war is memorialised in Australia as a comparative case study.

Essential Reading

1. Inuzuka, A. & Fuchs, T. 2014. Memories of Japanese militarism: The Yasukuni Shrine as a commemorative site. *The Journal of International Communication*. 20 (1): 21–41.
2. Allen, M. 2015. Ghostly remains and converging memories: Yūshūkan and the Australian War Memorial exhibit the Pacific War. *Asian Studies Review*. 39 (3): 430–446.

Week 12: Understanding Japanese migrants and residents in Australia

In the second lecture for Module 4: Japan in the World, we will explore the experiences of Japanese people who travel to Australia to study, work or permanently settle. We will begin with a brief overview of the history of Australia-Japan relations, before turning to investigating Australians' historical attitudes towards the Japanese. We will then explore the experiences of Japanese in Australia from a similar perspective to that adopted in Module 3 when discussing ethnic minorities in Japan. We will focus on how Japanese living in Australia maintain their cultural identities as Japanese, as well as explore how migrating to Australia leads to cultural hybridity. Our discussions will focus on reasons why Japanese choose to move to Australia, exploring important sociological theories concerning mobility and cosmopolitanism.

Essential Reading

1. Kawashima, K. 2014. Uneven cosmopolitanism: Japanese working holiday makers in Australia. In Breaden, J., Steele, S. & Stevens, C.S. (eds). *Internationalising Japan: Discourse and Practice*. Abingdon, Oxon & New York: Routledge, pp. 106–124.
2. Nagatomo, J. 2011. De-territorialized ethnic community: The residential choices and networks among Japanese lifestyle migrants in South-East Queensland. *Japanese Studies*. 31 (3): 423–440.

Week 13: Exploring nuclear disaster in a transnational context

In the final lecture for Module 4: Japan in the World, we will look at the transnationality of nuclear disaster via a case study of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of March 3, 2011. We will begin by investigating the history and effects of natural disaster on the formation of Japanese society, as well as explore transnational environmental activism surrounding pollution in Japan which emerged in the 1970s. We will then think about how the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant can be viewed transnationally, thinking through the global circulation of nuclear material between Japan, the US and Australia. We will tie these discussions to a renewed focus on social precariousness, taking our discussions of Japanese society full circle by investigating the informal life politics of those Japanese coping with nuclear fallout back home.

Essential Reading

1. Morris-Suzuki, T. 2015. Re-animating a radioactive landscape: Informal life politics in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. *Japan Forum*. 27 (2): 167–188.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)

- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

The Writing Centre

[The Writing Centre](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Workshops](#)
- [Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via [AskMQ](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.