

**East Asian Studies Program
PhD Summer School
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
June 25-28, 2013**

Children and Youth in Contemporary Japan

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Seminar Program

Some of the most critical discussions about society in Japan today are channeled through concerns about children and youth. Japanese media constantly worry about the young generation: They claim that boys and girls no longer want to grow up; that new technologies have made them afraid of engaging with mainstream adult society; that men no longer aspire to a white-collar career and steady middle-class life; and that women no longer want to marry and have babies and instead live with their parents for much longer than ever before. The last twenty years or so have also been marked by a recession and, more recently, by an international financial crisis. In April 2011, northeastern Japan was hit by an earthquake, followed by a tsunami and a nuclear crisis. This triple disaster further exacerbated a widespread sense of decline and fear of the future.

Against the backdrop of these broader, longstanding developments, this course examines some of the more prominent current perspectives on children and youth. We will begin by examining the question whether childhood is indeed disappearing as some social commentators have proclaimed (seminar 1). Then, we will analyze concerns about boys who, according to Japanese and worldwide public discourse no longer want to grow up (seminar 2). Girls are no less scrutinized by the older generation of social critics and, thus, we will look at some of the particularly “bad” ones (seminar 3). However tortured and superficial, progressive and scary Japanese youth culture looks to their elders, it has been going global. Hence, we will complete this seminar series by tracing that specific globalization and its implications for children and youth in Japan and around the globe (seminar 4).

The seminars sessions are organized in a threefold matter, including lecture, discussion and film clip screenings.

Seminar 1 (June 25): *Is Childhood Disappearing? Families and Schools*

- Mariko Fujita. 1989. "It's All Mother's Fault': Childcare and the Socialization of Working Mothers in Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 15(1):67–91.
- Merry White. 2002. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1–27.
- Andrea G. Arai, "The 'Wild Child' of 1990s Japan," in *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present*, ed. Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootyan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 216–238.

Screening of *Kokoyakyu: High School Baseball*.

Seminar 2 (June 26): *Will These Boys Become Men? Hikikomori, Otaku, NEET and Other Challenges to Mainstream Masculinity*

- James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki. 2003. "Introduction," James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki (eds.): *Men and masculinities in contemporary Japan*. London: Routledge, 1–20.
- Susan Napier. 2011. "Where Have All the Salarymen Gone? Masculinity, Masochism and Technomobility in *Densha Otoko*." In: *Recreating Japanese Men*, Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 154–175.
- Masako Ishii-Kuntz. 2003. "Balancing Fatherhood and Work: Emergence of Diverse Masculinities in Contemporary Japan." In *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan*. London: Routledge, 198–216.
- Sabine Frühstück. 2011. "After Heroism: Must 'Real' Soldiers Die?" In *Masculinities in Japan*, Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 91–114.

Screening of *Train Man*.

Seminar 3 (June 27)

Bad Girls? Parasaito Singuru and *Why Girls Want to (Primarily) Have Fun and Careers*

- Masahiro Yamada. "The Growing Crop of Spoiled Singles." *Japan Echo*, June 2000, 49–53.
- James M. Raymo. 1998. "Later Marriages or Fewer? Changes in the Marital Behavior of Japanese Women." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 60(4):1023–1034.
- Jan Bardsley and Hiroko Hirakawa. 2005. "Branded: Bad Girls Go Shopping." In *Bad Girls of Japan*, Jan Bardsley and Laura Miller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 111–125.

Sharon Kinsella. 2005. "Black Faces, Witches, and Racism Against Girls." In *Bad Girls of Japan*, Jan Bardsley and Laura Miller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 127–142.

Screening of *Kamikaze Girls*.

Seminar 4 (June 28)

Reinventions of Childhood and Youth: Japanese Youth Culture Goes Global

Allison, Anne. *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 234–270.

Condry, Ian. 2006. *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 134–163.

Hayashi, Sharon, and Anne McKnight. 2005. Good-bye Kitty, Hello War: The Tactics of Spectacle and New Youth Movements in Urban Japan. *positions* 13 (1):87–113.

Azuma, Hiroki. 2009[2001]. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*.

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, trans. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono.