

UAB 2026 PhD Summer School

Japanese Media and Cultural Industries: Text, Production, and Cultural Value

Instructor: Prof. Shinji Oyama (Ritsumeikan University)

Course Overview

This mini-course explores Japanese popular culture by moving from the analysis of texts to the study of the media industries that produce and circulate them. It begins with approaches from media and cultural studies, focusing on commercially valuable cultural forms in contemporary visual media—such as authenticity and cultural difference—through the analysis of materials including television, YouTube videos, and streaming content.

It then shifts toward the organization of cultural production, introducing a media industries perspective on how creative work is structured within institutions and how production processes shape cultural outcomes. Particular attention will be given to the Japanese context, including media industries, the role of the state (e.g. Cool Japan), and the organization of media workers—especially their education, recruitment, and career pathways—which shape who is able to enter and succeed within the media industries.

The sessions will be interactive and discussion-based, combining conceptual framing with the collective analysis of visual materials.

Day 1: Reading Japanese Media

Session 1

Authenticity and Cultural Value in Contemporary Japanese Media

This session introduces media and cultural studies approaches to Japanese popular culture through the analysis of selected examples from contemporary visual media. Topics may include authenticity, representation, identity, and cultural difference, with case studies drawn from television, streaming platforms, YouTube, advertising, and other media.

Session 2

Japan in Global Media and Cultural Flows

This session examines how Japanese popular culture circulates globally through processes of globalization, localization, and cultural exchange. Depending on students' interests, discussion may include Cool Japan, cultural branding, global media platforms, and changing images of Japan in international contexts.

Day 2: Inside Japanese Media Industries

Session 3

Media Industries and Cultural Production

This session shifts attention from media texts to the institutions and production systems that shape them. Topics may include media industries, production cultures, organizational structures, and the relationship between cultural production and industrial organization, illustrated through selected case studies.

Session 4

Creative Labor and the Organization of Media Production

The final session explores the people and institutions behind Japanese media production. Topics may include creative labor, education, recruitment, career pathways, and professional cultures, with discussion adapted to students' interests and current developments in Japanese media industries.

Format: Interactive seminar combining short lectures, discussion, and the collective analysis of visual materials.

Instructor:

Prof. Shinji Oyama (Ritsumeikan University)

<https://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/gsir/eng/faculty/article.html/?id=44>

Shinji Oyama is Professor at Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, and Visiting Professor at King's College London (2026–27). With a professional background in advertising and a fintech startup, his research bridges media and cultural studies with media industries analysis. He focuses on Japanese popular culture, creative labor, and the organization of media production. He holds an MA from Columbia University and a PhD from the University of London.