

Culture & Globalization

Time and Enrollment

Tuesdays, periods 4 & 5 (180 mins)
 3rd year: 5-7 students
 4th year: (special cases only)

Instructor Details

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 Office: [REDACTED]
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Description

This seminar uses the lens of *culture* to investigate how changes taking place on a global scale are transforming the intimate and everyday realities of individuals and communities, primarily but not limited to those here in Japan. By developing qualitative research skills drawn mainly from anthropology but also from cultural studies, media studies, and journalism, students will learn how to bring a community, their experiences, their values, and the problems they face to life by reading about them, collecting information from them first-hand through fieldwork, and by clearly and creatively writing about them. Most simply put, this seminar develops tools to understand other people and their different perspectives on the world, and then uses those perspectives as a way to explain, critique, and sometimes even improve upon those social and cultural worlds we call our own.

Research topics

As culture is something all humans share, the topics researchers of culture—or *anthropologists*—analyze are broad: they include everything from village life in Morocco to film studios in India to artificial intelligence labs in Tokyo. Accordingly, members of this seminar are free, and even encouraged, to take up diverse individual research projects. Here is a list of potential topics one might explore:

- Women facing unequal labor conditions in Japan's workplace environments
- Chinese, Korean, Brazilian, or other minority communities in Japan
- Subcultures, such as of hip hop or Lolita fashion, both in and outside Japan
- Pet owners in Japan and the changing shape of Japanese families
- Communities living near nuclear reactors and their attitudes toward nuclear energy
- Youth addicted to smart phones or the internet
- Product advertisers and their strategies of building consumer desire
- Brain death, organ transplant technologies, and the redefining of life and of death

Research themes

While research *topics* can be quite diverse and specific, this seminar aims to establish a common ground for discussion through different research *themes*, drawn from the most important theoretical contributions of scholars studying culture. Thus, in discussions between seminar members and the instructor, each year we will choose one or two themes through which to analyze our various projects. This is a list of themes through which we might explore the above topics:

- Consumption and material culture
- Emotions and affect
- Class and risk societies
- Media and artistic representation
- Design and infrastructure
- Cities
- Gender and sexuality
- Science and technology

Structure

In general, the first semester of each year is spent getting acquainted with fundamental theories and case studies exploring the relationship between culture and globalization. In the second

semester, students begin developing (third-year students) and researching (fourth-year students) their individual projects.

Each week's meeting will usually consist of two readings, 15-20 pages each: 1) a thematic reading usually guided by the instructor, and 2) a case study usually led by a student. As we move into the second semester, case-study readings will be increasingly replaced by research updates by individual students. In certain weeks, we will not have any readings and instead focus on a methodological exercise, which could be conceptual (e.g. make a map of all the different subcultures found along the Yamanote line), or practical (e.g. interview a single person both in person and by email and compare your responses).

Careers

As understanding and working with people of different cultures and perspectives is fundamental to any job setting, this seminar will likely benefit you no matter what your career goals. However, here are some employment fields this seminar may prepare you for particularly well:

- *NGOs and NPOs* – work with organizations in Japan or abroad attempting to assist local populations facing various economic, environmental, health, or cultural challenges.
- *Government* – work in local, prefectural, national, or international organizations in identifying problems through qualitative research methods and designing creative solutions
- *Advertising, PR, business* – Research the desires and dreams of consumers, helping companies build products that benefit their lives.
- *Education* – Continue your research on culture and society in graduate school, or teach in a variety of settings, applying your knowledge of how students' needs and learning styles differ from one cultural background to the next.

Requirements

1. Seminar students should have taken at least two of the following courses: Anthropology (100), Cultural Studies (200), Cultural Globalization (200)
2. Seminar students should concurrently enroll in, or have taken, the following courses: Social Theory (300), Ethnographic Methods (300)

*Students are expected to participate in the seminar for two years; well-argued exceptions will be considered. Transferring either in or out of the seminar is generally discouraged.

Assessment

1. Participation (40%) – Come each week prepared and willing to discuss readings; lead at least one period's reading discussion each semester; hand in intermittent research assignments such as reading questions or a methods exercise.
2. Semester-end paper (60%) – progress report or theory paper for first semester (5-7 pages); research proposal (3rd years: 10-12 pages) or research paper (4th years: 20-25 pages) for second semester.

Application process and related details

During the seminar registration week send an email to [REDACTED] stating your formal decision to apply for this seminar. I will then send you a questionnaire to fill out to complete the application process. **Interviews** will be held in [REDACTED]. **Observations** of the seminar prior to application are welcome on October 11 and October 18. Please notify me of your request in advance. **Successful applicants** will be notified on their application result on November 16.

I look forward to hearing from you!