

International Japanese Studies Talk Series

International Japanese Studies Group at Kanagawa University

The International Japanese Studies Group in the Institute for Humanities Research at Kanagawa University is pleased to announce its spring talk schedule as well as its tentative autumn schedule.

All meetings in the spring semester will take place from 15:30 to 17:00 in 8015 on our Minatomirai Campus. All talks will be given in English. **Preregistration at least a day in advance for those coming from outside the KU community is greatly appreciated.** Please use the QR code on the information page for each talk. If you are coming from off campus, **please also register as a Guest at the Information counter near the entrance** before coming up to the room. (Preregistration is **not** necessary to attend talks online, when offered.)

Inquiries (お問い合わせ): James Welker jrwelker@kanagawa-u.ac.jp

Spring 2025 Schedule

Details:

Wednesday, 23 April 2025 (In person only)

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Waiyee Loh, Kanagawa University

Cosmopolitan Communities in Port Cities: Amitav Ghosh's Canton and Yokomitsu Riichi's Shanghai

Wednesday, 21 May 2025 (Hybrid)

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Megan Rose, University of New South Wales & University of Tokyo

Hyperfeminine Harajuku: Exploring Queer KAWAII Practices in a Tokyo Subcultural District

Wednesday, 18 June 2025 (In person only)

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Daniele Durante, Ca' Foscari University & Kanagawa University

Why Is Cross-Dressing Perceived as a Fray in the Social Fabric?

A Case Study from Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan

Wednesday, 23 July 2025 (Hybrid)

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Julia C. Bullock, Emory University

Beauvoir in Japan: Japanese Women and *The Second Sex*

Autumn 2025 Schedule

(Tentative)

Wednesday, 24 September 2025

Chen Yen-yi, Sophia University

Bodies Performed: Images and Worship of *Shaka* in Medieval Japan.

Wednesday, 22 October 2025

Alejandro Morales, Kanagawa University

Monstrous Obsessions: The Undercurrents of Desire in the Aesthetics of Izumi Kyoka

Wednesday, 19 November 2025

P.A. George, Kanagawa University

Difficulties of Translating Japanese Literature into Foreign Languages: With Special Reference to Malayalam

Translation of Ishikawa Takuboku's *Ichiku no suna* (A handful of sand)

Wednesday, 17 December 2025

Elise Voyau, Kanagawa University

Japan in Tension After 1968: The Workshop School of Photography in Focus

Wednesday, 21 January 2026

Quintana Scherer, Kanagawa University

***Yokohama-e* and the Imagined Foreigner**

Further details (abstracts, location, access, etc.) will be announced in September.

Cosmopolitan Communities in Port Cities: Amitav Ghosh's Canton and Yokomitsu Riichi's Shanghai

Waiyee Loh

Associate Professor

Department of English, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 23 April 2025 (In person only)

15:30–17:00

Room 8015

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: This talk examines the representation of cross-cultural communities in two works of fiction set in port cities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Amitav Ghosh's *Flood of Fire* (2015) and Yokomitsu Riichi's *Shanghai* (1928–1931). Set mainly in the Chinese ports of Canton and Shanghai, the two novels foreground the littoral landscape of the port city as a liminal space that destabilises the distinctions between land and water, inside and outside. Within this liminal space, the novels' characters form cross-cultural communities that embody a transformative mode of cosmopolitanism. Firstly, these fictional communities echo the empirical dimension of current theories of cosmopolitanism in the way in which they bring together people from different places around the world in the contact zone of the port city. More crucially, these fictional communities speak to the normative dimension of cosmopolitanism, which Gerard Delanty and Pheng Cheah have theorised as a process of self or social transformation that emerges out of the interaction between self and other. The cosmopolitan communities in *Flood of Fire* and *Shanghai* are based on common interests and shared experiences rather than on kinship, ethnicity, religion, and place of origin. As such, they offer forms of sociality that are adjacent to conventional categories of identity formation, especially that of the nation-state. Like the coastal spaces they inhabit, these port city communities cross boundaries to forge new friendships, but they are also subject to being “flooded” and torn apart by historical events and processes that are beyond their control. *Flood of Fire* and *Shanghai* look back on Canton and Shanghai respectively in the wake of increasing British and Japanese intervention in the region over the long nineteenth century. In doing so, the two novels also present new ways of being in the world appropriate to global cities today.



William Daniel, *View of the Canton Factories*, 1805–1806. Image from MIT Visualizing Cultures, visualizingcultures.mit.edu/rise_fall_canton_04/cw_gal_01_thumb.html. (License: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/)

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Loh, Preregistration

International Japanese Studies Group

 世界へ、そして未来へ
神奈川大学 人文学研究所
The Institute for Humanities Research
Kanagawa University

Hyperfeminine Harajuku: Exploring Queer KAWAII Practices in a Tokyo Subcultural District

Megan Rose

Postdoctoral Researcher, Vitalities Lab, University of New South Wales, Sydney
Visiting Scholar, Interfaculty Initiative for Information Studies at the University of Tokyo

Wednesday, 21 May 2025 (Hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 8015

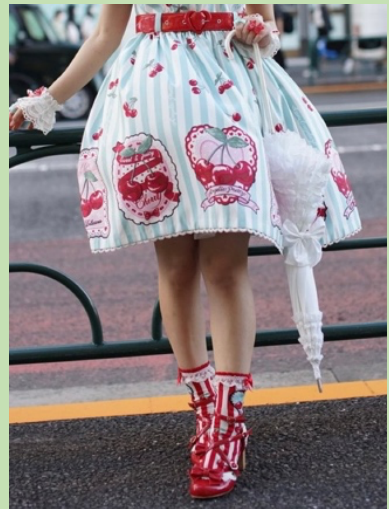
Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: In this talk I explore the creative practices of Harajuku's subcultures. Harajuku is a town in Tokyo that is a safe space for women, men and gender diverse people as early as the 1970s. Over recent decades, numerous KAWAII fashion subcultures have emerged in this district, each with their own specific conventions, aesthetics, purposes and intents including lolita fashion, *decora* fashion, *yume kawaii*, fairy *kei*, *menhera*. KAWAII is a significant cultural site for marginalized people to find collective safety and creatively work through their experiences and find a place of belonging. In the increasingly fractured social landscape of Tokyo, an eclectic group of artists, photographers, musicians, and designers come together in a constellation of spectacular bodies to play with KAWAII fashion. Their efforts are supported by underground queer feminist movements of Tokyo that protest, disrupt, and agitate through art, talk, and zine collectives in a blaze of shimmering hot pink.



Photos by @tomoike2525 (on X)

The talk considers the differing ways KAWAII is queered by these groups as an expression of dis/affection, in/dependence and a/sexuality. Queering KAWAII refers to a process of estrangement and de-familiarisation of cuteness as a form of hyperfemininity. As part of global queer femme cultures, hyperfemininity contaminates gender binaries, and exaggerates and pushes the parameters of patriarchal femininity as a form of disruption, experimentation, and reflection. Centred on the affective stories, fashion objects and garments and texts that KAWAII fashion practitioners create, this talk explores the social motivations, politics and ideologies of this subcultural movement. The talk traverses themes of marginality, vulnerability, and women and gender diverse people's defiance in facing structural sexism, sexual violence, queerphobia, and ableism.



To Attend Online (Zoom):

Access the Zoom Meeting via the following Meeting ID and Passcode. **Preregistration is NOT required to attend via Zoom.**

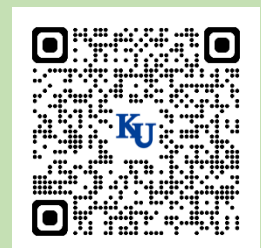
Meeting ID: 985 5806 9693 Passcode: KUMMC

To Attend in Person:

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Rose, Preregistration

Why Is Cross-Dressing Perceived as a Fray in the Social Fabric? A Case Study from Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan

Daniele Durante

Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies, Ca' Foscari University
Visiting Researcher, Faculty of Cross-Cultural and Japanese Studies, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 18 June 2025 (In person only)
15:30–17:00
Room 8015
Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract:

Between the 1730s and 1840s, in Edo (modern-day Tokyo), Osaka, and Kyoto groups of women who belonged to different social classes, including prostitutes, commoners, warriors, and high-ranking women, donned the *haori* jacket, a garment usually worn by men. In the 1740s and 1840s, legislators enacted specific sumptuary laws to forbid this practice as it encouraged the mixing of women from dissimilar social backgrounds. However, in the legal texts the lawmakers did not specify the complex social, political, and cultural reasons why such mixing brought about by urban women's (mis)use of the *haori* was considered problematic. To fully understand this aspect of the phenomenon, it is therefore crucial to study supplementary sources which offer a more comprehensive overview of the issues linked with the practice. Examining "miscellanies" (*zuihitsu*, literally "following the brush") written by intellectuals of the time, this paper suggests that urban women's donning of the *haori* destabilised the very foundations of contemporary society: Early modern Japan and particularly its major cities were in fact structured as a garrison state wherein each individual occupied a precise "status" (*mibun*), which was visually signaled by his or her clothes. Furthermore, attire also optically denoted a person's gender. By serving as visible indicators of one's status and gender, dresses functioned as what Herman Ooms has termed "social tattoos." This paper argues that by wearing the *haori* urban women altered their markers of status and gender, thus shaking the social, political, and cultural organisation of the state at its core.



One sheet from an unidentified diptych or triptych
Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864)
1854 (Date seal of Sixth Month and *aratame*)
Signature: *Toyokuni ga* (in *toshidama* cartouche)
Publisher: Tsutaya Kichizō (Kōeidō)
Carver: Chō Take
Vertical *ōban nishiki-e*, 34.7 x 23.3 cm

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Durante, Preregistration

Beauvoir in Japan: Japanese Women and *The Second Sex*

Julia Bullock

Professor

Department of Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures, Emory University

Wednesday, 23 July 2025 (Hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 8015

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract:

Simone de Beauvoir's monumental work of feminist philosophy, *The Second Sex*, was translated into Japanese in 1953, just four short years after its first appearance in French. The timing of this translation, *Daini no sei*, was fortuitous—Japan had just emerged from the shadow of the Allied Occupation and was struggling with the legacy of its postwar reforms. These reforms offered Japanese women an unprecedented array of rights and opportunities, but those who sought to exercise such rights still had to confront conservative norms that expected them to channel their ambitions into “careers” as wives and mothers. To many who sought an unconventional life-course, Beauvoir's vision of “freedom” through financial independence and professional projects offered an enticing alternative to the prewar “good wife, wise mother” model of femininity—even if, or perhaps because, this vision was difficult to attain in actuality.



Simone de Beauvoir on her 1966 visit to Japan

In this presentation, I explore the way Japanese women in the 1950s and 1960s understood the value of Beauvoir's theories for their own life and work, responses that ranged from homage and appropriation to parody and critique. We'll see Beauvoir's Japanese readers “write back” to her, in fictional and non-fictional form, on marriage and motherhood, career and family obligations, romantic relationships, and the struggle to reconcile cultural constructions of femininity with their own personal philosophies and inclinations. We'll see Asabuki Tomiko, the beleaguered interpreter who served as Beauvoir and Sartre's tour guide and primary handler while in Japan, take the French philosophers at their word when they suggested her own life would make as good a story as anything they had written. We'll see fiction writer Kurahashi Yumiko, a college student whose debut story upended the Japanese literary establishment, take inspiration from Beauvoir's advocacy of career over marriage and motherhood, only to find herself a victim of her own success. A young wife named Okabe Itsuko will read *The Second Sex* and promptly divorce her abusive husband, reinventing herself as a successful and beloved essayist. Setouchi Harumi, another controversial female fiction writer, will swoon at Beauvoir's fashionable persona and intellectual swagger, yet still wonder aloud whether she regretted not having Sartre's babies.

These women and many others will complicate and critique Beauvoir's philosophy, even as they admire it and try to implement it in their own lives. Their stories not only offer us a valuable window onto that historic encounter between Beauvoir and her Japanese public in 1966. They also presage the many ways that the lives of women in Japan, and elsewhere, would change over subsequent decades, as norms of gender and sexuality shifted following the “women's lib” activism of the 1970s.

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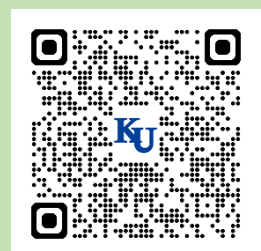
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Bullock, Preregistration

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