Inequality in Japan: Aging, Region, Welfare
Syllabus

Module
Japanese Society and Social Structure (AEAS 3)

Lecturer
Dr. Vitali Heidt
vitali.heidt@uni-due.de

Time & Place
Thursday, 16:15 – 17:45
LE 736

Office Hours
Thursday, 15:00 – 16:00
LE 727

Course description
At least since the 1980s the narrative of Japan as a middle-class society (中流社会 chûryû shakai) has emerged and has remained in public and academic discourse ever since. Inequality as such, however, persisted throughout and has increasingly become a topic of interest in academia and society, termed as gap society (格差社会, kakusa shakai), circling around influences by the ‘lost decades’, the continued aging of Japan, the deregulation of labor and the support (or lack thereof) by the Japanese social security system.

Taking up on the long-standing debate on social gaps, in this seminar we will focus on inequality within contemporary Japanese society. Three dimensions contributing to the emergence of inequality will be discussed in this seminar: the graying of Japan in the context of demographic change, increasing spatial discrepancies and changes in welfare creation and their social impact.

This seminar is part of the module “Japanese Society and Social Structure” (AEAS3). Upon successful completion, seminar participants will have developed deep knowledge on social inequality concerning age, region, gender and welfare and will be able to critically discuss and evaluate academic literature on contemporary Japanese society and its social issues.

Requirements
Participants are required to be prepared for each session. Required literature will be reviewed and discussed in class. Participants are required to:

- attend the course regularly,
- prepare and read the required texts,
- actively participate in class discussion.
Grading

Students will be evaluated on the basis of their preparation of literature, active participation in discussions and their written assignment. Class performance and written assignment equally contribute to the final grade. The evaluation is based on both course-specific participation and activity, and a written assignment for the module as a whole.

Course material

All readings for the course are posted on Moodle and students are expected to download and print the course materials themselves as appropriate and be prepared for class.

The password for the Moodle course is: heidt2017

Seminar schedule

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content and required readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>19.10.2017</td>
<td>- cancelled -</td>
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| 02 | 26.10.2017 | **Introduction**
  - Areas of interest
  - Prior knowledge in methodology and research
  - Use of reference management software
  - Introduction to inequality in Japan
  Read the IN-EAST Guidelines for academic work and written assignments (formal requirements, plagiarism, declaration of originality) |
| 03 | 02.11.2017 | **Demographic aging of Japan**
General background on Japan’s demography:
| 04 | 09.11.2017 | **Social class in Japan**
| 05 | 16.11.2017 | **Social inequality**
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>- postponed -</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Local initiatives to cope with inequality</td>
<td>Okubo, Mika, Abrar Juhar Mohammed &amp; Makoto Inoue. 2015. Out-migrants and Local Institutions: Case Study of a Depopulated Mountain Village in Japan. <em>Asian Culture and History</em> 8(1).</td>
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<td>Wrap-Up</td>
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<td>Hand-in your written assignment</td>
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(Status 10.01.2018)