
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

#	Date	Content and required readings
01	19.10.2017	- cancelled -
02	26.10.2017	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Areas of interest▪ Prior knowledge in methodology and research▪ Use of reference management software▪ Introduction to inequality in Japan <p>Read the IN-EAST Guidelines for academic work and written assignments (formal requirements, plagiarism, declaration of originality)</p>
03	02.11.2017	Demographic aging of Japan <p>Kōno, Shigemi. 2011. Confronting the demographic trilemma of low fertility, ageing and depopulation. In Florian Coulmas & Ralph Lützel (eds), <i>Imploding populations in Japan and Germany: A comparison</i>, 35–53. Leiden: Brill.</p> <p>General background on Japan's demography: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. 2016. <i>Annual Health, Labour and Welfare Report 2015</i>. 4-27, (General Welfare and Labour).</p>
04	09.11.2017	Social class in Japan <p>Ishida, Hiroshi & David H. Slater. 2010. Social Class in Japan. In Hiroshi Ishida & David H. Slater (eds), <i>Social class in contemporary Japan: Structures, sorting and strategies</i>. London: Routledge.</p>
05	16.11.2017	Social inequality <p>Shirahase, Sawako. 2010. Japan as a stratified society: With a focus on class identification. <i>Social Science Japan Journal</i> 13(1). 31–52.</p>

06	23.11.2017	Gender inequalities through social policy Abe, Aya K. 2012. Poverty and Social Exclusion of Women in Japan. <i>Japanese Journal of Social Security Policy</i> 9(1). 61–82.
07	30.11.2017	Regional depopulation and coping strategies Matanle, Peter & Anthony S. Rausch. 2011. <i>Japan's shrinking regions in the 21st century: Contemporary responses to depopulation and socioeconomic decline</i> . Amherst, NY: Cambria Press. 83-123.
08	07.12.2017	Regional welfare Kerr, Alex. 2002. <i>Dogs and demons: Tales from the dark side of modern Japan</i> . New York: Hill and Wang. 13-50.
09	14.12.2017	Politics of regional disparities Song, Jiyeoun. 2015. Japan's Regional Inequality in Hard Times. <i>Pacific Focus</i> 30(1). 126–149.
10	21.12.2017	- postponed -
11	11.01.2018	Japan's welfare state in comparison Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1997. Hybrid or Unique? The Japanese Welfare State Between Europe and America. <i>Journal of European Social Policy</i> 7(3). 179–189.
12	18.01.2018	Increasing pressure in regional welfare Tanaka, Kimiko & Miho Iwasawa. 2010. Aging in rural Japan - Limitations in the current social care policy. <i>Journal of aging & social policy</i> 22(4). 394–406.
13	25.01.2018	Local initiatives to cope with inequality Okubo, Mika, Abrar Juhar Mohammed & Makoto Inoue. 2015. Out-migrants and Local Institutions: Case Study of a Depopulated Mountain Village in Japan. <i>Asian Culture and History</i> 8(1).
14	01.02.2018	Inequality in gender relations and public policy Chen, Steven. 2012. The rise of Soshokukei Danshi masculinity and consumption in contemporary Japan. In Cele C. Otnes & Linda Tuncay Zayer (eds.), <i>Gender, culture, and consumer behavior</i> . New York: Routledge. & Wrap-Up
–	31.03.2018	Hand-in your written assignment

(Status 10.01.2018)