



大阪大学グローバル日本学教育研究拠点 主催
「国際日本研究」コンソーシアム 共催

Eighth Annual Osaka Graduate Conference in Japanese Studies

**2026年1月24日
大阪大学中之島センター
セミナー室 7C/7D**

EIGHTH ANNUAL OSAKA GRADUATE CONFERENCE IN JAPANESE STUDIES

January 24, 2026 (Saturday)

University of Osaka Nakanoshima Center

Seminar Rooms 7C/7D

Time	Speaker
9:00–9:10	Opening Remarks (UNODA Shōya and Nicholas LAMBRECHT, University of Osaka)
9:10–9:20	Introductions of Panelists and Commentators
9:20–11:05	PANEL #1
9:20	The Body as Instrument: Tamura Taijirō’s “Flesh Literature” and Existential Phenomenology (Kyoko Hashimoto TELFER, Waseda University)
9:55	Cat Literature in 21st-Century Japan: Questioning Catgency in <i>The Blanket Cats</i> (Jorge GARZÓN, Nagoya University)
10:30	The Aesthetics of Anticipatory Grief During Terminal Home Care in Japan: From “Diary of My Sixteenth Year” (1925) to <i>My Grandmother, My Camera</i> (2022) (Ayane MIYASHITA, Kyoto University)
11:05–12:05	Lunch Break
12:05–13:50	PANEL #2
12:05	Reconsidering Realism in Crisis: Kawaguchi Hiroshi’s “Negative Realism” and Its Global Resonance (Justyna ZIELONY, Sophia University)
12:40	Japanese Comedy Through a Transmedia Lens: Jaru Jaru’s Multimedia Sketch Comedy as Media Mix (Bawuk RESPATI, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)
13:15	Impacts of Cultural Relocation on the Mental Wellbeing of Adolescent Japanese Students Abroad (Mickie Hirose GRACE, University of Osaka / Chiba University)
13:50–14:05	Short Break
14:05–15:50	PANEL #3
14:05	Universal Symbolism and Cultural Distance: Premodern Perceptions of Death in Japan and Ukraine (Tetiana TKACHENKO, University of Osaka)
14:40	Islandness and Empire in Luisa Igloria’s “Impossible Bottles” and Tawada Yōko’s <i>The Last Children of Tokyo</i> (Patricia P. YUMUL, Nagoya University)
15:15	Language, Responsibility, and Reconciliation: Ibaragi Noriko’s Encounters with Korean Poetry (Tomas MURILLO, Waseda University)
15:50–16:05	Short Break
16:05–16:55	General Discussion (Travis SEIFMAN, Ritsumeikan University; AKIYAMA Kaori and Facundo GARASINO, University of Osaka; and the conference organizers)

**The Body as Instrument: Tamura Taijirō's
“Flesh Literature” and Existential Phenomenology**

**Kyoko Hashimoto TELFER
Master's Student, Waseda University**

In the 1940s, the Japanese author Tamura Taijirō (1911–1983) gained notoriety for his “flesh literature” (*nikutai bungaku*) stories, which featured erotic elements and a focus on the epistemological value of the human body. These short stories were later adapted into a number of feature films that ranged from critically and commercially acclaimed to critically panned. Concurrently in France, the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty was publishing his ideas on existential phenomenology, seeking to establish a research methodology that integrates the human body as the vessel through which new information is acquired. Although *nikutai bungaku* and existential phenomenology share this critical view of the body as the basis of human existence and as an instrument for discerning knowledge about the world and humanity, past analyses of Tamura's works and their film adaptations have not been conducted through a phenomenological lens.

Through a close reading of Tamura's essays, this presentation examines Tamura's theoretical understanding of his own work, especially in the context of post-World War II Japan, and clarifies its similarities to Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology. I argue that Tamura's theoretical stance stems from an ideological standpoint in relation to postwar politics that frames the *nikutai* (the flesh of the individual) against the wartime *kokutai* (the “national body”). By locating commonalities between Tamura's *nikutai bungaku* discourse and existential phenomenology and then incorporating film theorist Vivian Sobchack's ideas about the application of existential phenomenology to film studies, I establish a theoretical framework that can be used for future analysis of the film adaptations of Tamura's work.

**Cat Literature in 21st-Century Japan:
Questioning Catgency in *The Blanket Cats***

Jorge GARZÓN
Master's Student, Nagoya University

Self-centered, talkative, and understanding cats appear often in modern Japanese literature. In Japanese comfort literature such cats hold a privileged cultural status: they are useful not as mousers but rather as beings that are emotionally connected to humans. However, this relationship has been represented by and for humans, turning cats into a mere anthropocentric narrative device, a commodity overflowing with affective value. Human-nonhuman relations have been explored in studies in many fields, but research focused on 21st-century Japanese literary representations is still scarce. Ideas from Cultural and Literary Animal Studies (CLAS) about affective labor, zopoetics, and the definition of a companion species are useful for filling this gap. For that reason, I examine how contemporary Japanese literature narrates humans and animals, especially through the ways agency, voice, and empathy are projected onto cats.

In this presentation I focus on the representation of cats' agency, or "catgency", in Shigematsu Kiyoshi's *The Blanket Cats* (*Buranketto kyattsu*, 2008). I argue that this collection of stories, like others from authors such as Arikawa Hiro and Nagano Mayumi, showcases a variety of approaches that assimilate cats into their discourse in misleading ways. Shigematsu's novel includes seven stories about a group of rental cats that apparently help and heal each new renter, receiving accommodation and food in return. Yet below that transaction lies a list of contractual rules, a lack of freedom, and questionable ethical practices. To analyze the rental arrangement, we should question representations of cats' subjectivity and affective labor in "healing literature", problematize human-nonhuman power relationships, and critique how catgency has been instrumentalized for affective profit. This ultimately reveals how the text subsumes animal suffering to deceive readers and manufacture shallow interspecies connections.

**The Aesthetics of Anticipatory Grief During Terminal Home Care in Japan: From
“Diary of My Sixteenth Year” (1925) to *My Grandmother, My Camera* (2022)**

Ayane MIYASHITA

Master’s Student, Kyoto University

Caregiving involves complex emotions, including anticipatory grief, the emotional reaction experienced by family caregivers when they accept the fact that their family member’s death is inevitable. Compared to grief after death, anticipatory grief grows over time while the loved one is still alive, and it affects individuals physically, psychologically, spiritually, and socially.

The autobiographical work “Diary of My Sixteenth Year” (“Jūroku-sai no nikki”, 1925) shows how Japanese author Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972) experienced such anticipatory grief while caring for his terminally ill grandfather at home. In this story, released in the aftermath of the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic when access to medical infrastructure was limited and primary care had shifted to domestic settings, Kawabata elaborately records his grandfather’s condition and his own emotions, thereby illustrating the four dimensions of anticipatory grief. Likewise, the medical doctor Son Daisuke made the film *My Grandmother, My Camera* (*Uchige de ikitai*, 2022) during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting a new set of increased caregiving responsibilities within the domestic sphere. The film depicts a grandchild who strives to produce a record of her terminally ill grandmother through filmmaking. Both Kawabata’s novel and Son’s film center caregivers’ acts of recording, reflecting the anticipatory grief that must be confronted within domestic spheres in times of public health crises.

My research investigates how anticipatory grief is represented in Japanese literature and film, using these examples as case studies. Previous research has revealed how grief and mourning are visualized as post-death rituals. However, I focus on the emotional labor of family members during the dying process to shed light on caregivers’ emotional burdens. By situating this study within the framework of the ethics of care, I carefully analyze how family carers’ acts of recording give form to their emotions.

**Reconsidering Realism in Crisis: Kawaguchi Hiroshi's
"Negative Realism" and Its Global Resonance**

Justyna ZIELONY

Master's Student, Sophia University

In our current moment marked by global instability, ecological anxiety, and a deep sense of exhaustion, the idea of progress has lost much of its persuasive power. The same sense of disillusionment can be observed in literary fiction, especially in works that still call themselves realist. Once expected to mirror reality, realism now faces a world that no longer offers coherence to be reflected. This shift raises a central question: what does it mean for literature to represent reality when reality itself has become unstable or fragmented?

This presentation approaches that tension through the thought of Kawaguchi Hiroshi, a Japanese literary critic who proposed the idea of "negative realism" (*hiteiteki riarizumu*) in the 1930s. Developed during debates on proletarian literature, Kawaguchi's theory rejects both revolutionary optimism and aesthetic detachment. Instead, it begins with the recognition of a fractured world and asks how truth and meaning might still emerge within it. I argue that Kawaguchi's framework transforms realism from a technique for description into a philosophical and ethical stance that confronts contradiction, limitation, and despair without resorting to transcendence or denial.

By reexamining Kawaguchi's theory and positioning it within the broader discourse on literary realism, this study seeks to establish a conceptual ground for interpreting the realist impulse in later literature, both in Japan and beyond. In doing so, it provides a theoretical lens for rereading works by writers such as Yoko Tawada, Kōbō Abe, Ling Ma, or even J. G. Ballard who have depicted crisis and fragmentation not as obstacles to representation, but as the very conditions through which reality becomes visible, meaningful, and shared. In this way, the study reconsiders Japanese realist fiction in general and connects its ideas with international modes of reading.

**Japanese Comedy Through a Transmedia Lens:
Jaru Jaru's Multimedia Sketch Comedy as Media Mix**

Bawuk RESPATI

Doctoral Student, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Japan's contemporary comedy culture, or *owarai* culture, is rooted in the traditions of stage-based comic performance art, but has since matured into a complex cultural network under the influence of the media industry. The complexity of this network has intensified due to recent advances in digital technology and internet connectivity that have amplified the flow of content across multiple media. In the current era of media convergence, Japanese comedy performances are extensively commodified through a system of transmedia practices, otherwise known as "media mix" in Japan.

To illustrate the features of "media mix" in Japanese comedy, this presentation examines the sketch comedy (*konto*, from the French *conte*) of the popular Japanese comedy duo Jaru Jaru as a transmedia phenomenon. Jaru Jaru primarily connects with their audiences through their biannual live comedy tour and YouTube channels. Additionally, in 2020 and 2021, responding in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, they released two feature films. These films, marketed as "*conte-cinema*" (*konto shinema*), adapted Jaru Jaru's sketch comedy performances for the medium of film. This endeavor created a multi-layered network of content around the Jaru Jaru persona, exemplifying a transmedia practice. Using the "media mix" concept as a theoretical framework, this presentation analyzes Jaru Jaru's transmedia and multimedia approach to their sketch comedy to show how comedy performance in Japan functions as a cultural commodity that can be transported across a multiple media formats. The findings of this analysis show how Japan's contemporary comedy culture is closely intertwined with shifts affecting the media industry at large.

**Impacts of Cultural Relocation on the Mental Wellbeing
of Adolescent Japanese Students Abroad**

Mickie Hirose GRACE

Doctoral Student, University of Osaka / Chiba University

Adolescence is a critical period for identity formation and psychological development. Japanese sojourner students (*kaigai shijo*) who migrate to the United States during this stage often encounter unique challenges in adapting to local school environments, and these difficulties may lead to school avoidance behaviors or, in some cases, an early return to Japan. This study uses data from the 2023–2024 California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), an anonymous statewide survey administered to public school students in California, to determine risk factors that can be used to anticipate which students are likely to experience difficulty adapting to their new environments.

Findings indicate that across a variety of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, a particular combination of two factors—English not being the primary language spoken at home and students' self-reported inability to understand English—serves as a strong predictor of elevated stress levels. Importantly, once students acquire basic communicative competence in English, their stress levels decline, resilience improves, and relationships with teachers strengthen. Given the critical nature of the early adaptation phase, this study proposes that supplementary opportunities for *kaigai shijo* to accelerate their English acquisition, such as the option to receive intensive instruction prior to overseas school enrollment, may be more effective than relying solely on school-based English learning programs.

While living abroad provides adolescents with valuable opportunities to engage with diverse cultures, values, and ethnicities, thereby contributing to identity formation and global competence, Japanese sojourner students receive limited institutional support from the Japanese government. If these students are to be recognized as future assets for Japan, greater investment in resources and support systems is essential.

**Universal Symbolism and Cultural Distance:
Premodern Perceptions of Death in Japan and Ukraine**

Tetiana TKACHENKO
Doctoral Student, University of Osaka

Scholars trace the first contact between Japanese and Ukrainian cultures to the sixteenth century. It might seem impossible to identify historical similarities between such cultures that had little direct interaction. At the same time, death is a universal phenomenon, and one of the most effective ways to understand a particular culture's attitude toward death is through analyzing the symbolism associated with it. Because Japan and Ukraine shared similar hierarchical court structures, the symbolism found in their premodern literatures might show similarities even though they developed in isolation. If we examine literary depictions of death and its symbolism in premodern works of literature such as the *Man'yōshū* and the *Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern (Kokin wakashū)* from Japan and *The Tale of Igor's Campaign (Slovo o pŭlku Igorevĕ)* and *A Sermon about the Ruling Princes (Slovo pro knyaziv)* from Ukraine, is it possible to see links between these cultures in their beliefs about death and the afterlife?

This presentation argues that even in cases where direct historical contact does not exist, it is possible to identify common cultural responses to universal human experiences such as death. Using death in aristocratic circles as a reference point, I analyze symbols of death in seventh- to twelfth-century Japanese and Ukrainian literature. The study compares these symbols by identifying their structural roles and the cultural contexts in which they appear, discovering points of convergence and divergence in how the cultures perceived death and attributing them to particular historical, social, and religious factors. The discovery of shared symbols in Japanese and Ukrainian premodern works may be applied to the study of other cultures as well, revealing common ways in which societies express their beliefs about death. Accordingly, the study shows that symbolic meanings can emerge from shared human experience rather than historical connection.

**Islandness and Empire in Luisa Igloria’s “Impossible Bottles”
and Tawada Yōko’s *The Last Children of Tokyo***

Patricia P. YUMUL
Master’s Student, Nagoya University

In literature, islands are frequently depicted as small, remote, and secluded. This association with isolation has led to interpretations of islands as exotic and bounded, and therefore as spaces that reject interaction with the outside world. The recent relational turn in island studies, however, encourages a more diverse and open understanding of the literary island through a concept called islandness. Geographers Stephen Royle and Laurie Brinklow highlight the potential of islandness to frustrate established binaries by embracing a spectrum of definitions. David Chandler and Jonathan Pugh, meanwhile, point out how islandness reflects the entanglement inherent in the Anthropocene.

Although both Japan and the Philippines are island countries on the Pacific Ring of Fire, Japan’s history as a colonial oppressor and imperial power distinguishes it from the Philippines, a multiply colonized country in the Global South. Crossing this divide, in this presentation I show how both Filipino-American writer Luisa Igloria and Japanese-German writer Tawada Yōko—border-crossing authors writing from beyond the countries in which they were raised—frame the island as a site of tensions between decay and renewal, urban and natural, and center and periphery. While Igloria’s “Impossible Bottles” (2021) traces how islands and their environments have changed throughout history as a result of colonial occupation, the rise and fall of empires, and global capitalism, in Tawada’s *The Last Children of Tokyo* (*Kentōshi*, also known as *The Emissary*, 2014) the isolated island rests on the edge of habitability, under quarantine and mired in contamination after an unspecified disaster. Using islandness to facilitate comparison between the texts, this analysis underscores how literary islands can generate valuable insight on the enduring vestiges of empire during a time of mounting ecological precarity.

**Language, Responsibility, and Reconciliation:
Ibaragi Noriko's Encounters with Korean Poetry**

Tomas MURILLO
Doctoral Student, Waseda University

This presentation explores how the Japanese poet Ibaragi Noriko (1926–2006) used poetry and the Korean language as means to confront Japan's wartime actions and to accept a kind of responsibility she had been too young to bear during the Pacific War. While Ibaragi's earlier poetry, exemplified by "When I Was at My Most Beautiful" ("Watashi ga ichiban kirei datta toki", 1957), reflects the loss and despair of her own wartime experience, many of her later works show a conscious effort to move beyond her personal experiences and reach toward the suffering that Japan had inflicted on others.

In the 1970s, Ibaragi, already an accomplished poet, started learning Korean and developed a long friendship and correspondence with the Korean poet Hong Yunsuk (1925–2015). In 1982 Ibaragi wrote "The Forest of Neighboring Tongues" ("Ringokugo no mori"), a poem that blends together Japanese and Korean and serves as an homage to Yun Dongju, a young Korean poet who died in a Japanese prison in 1945. In 1990 Ibaragi published *Selected Contemporary Korean Poetry (Kankoku gendai shisen)*, an anthology of her own translations of Korean poetry. Ibaragi's engagement with Korea's language and its poetry shows her intention to reach out to apologize to this neighboring country and seek reconciliation.

By reading excerpts of "The Forest of Neighboring Tongues" alongside one of Ibaragi's translations of Hong's poems and the correspondence between them, this presentation examines Ibaragi's motivation for learning Korean and what she accomplished by engaging with and incorporating this language into her poetry. It also shows how, in her later years, Ibaragi used poetry not only as a vehicle for aesthetic expression but also as a conscious act of taking responsibility for the past and as a means to build bridges toward the future.

EIGHTH ANNUAL OSAKA GRADUATE CONFERENCE IN JAPANESE STUDIES

University of Osaka Global Studies Education and Research Incubator /

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Conference Organizers and Commentators

UNODA Shōya

Professor of Japanese Studies, University of Osaka

Unoda Shōya holds a PhD in Japanese Studies from the University of Osaka and specializes in Japanese intellectual history. His recent research has involved the Zainichi Korean cultural and social movements of the early postwar period. He chairs the Global Japanese Studies Program at the University of Osaka and is Associate Director of the Global Japanese Studies Education and Research Incubator (GJS-ERI).

Nicholas LAMBRECHT

Associate Professor of Japanese Studies, University of Osaka

Nicholas Lambrecht holds a PhD in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago. His research examining modern and contemporary Japanese literature, particularly works dealing with postwar repatriation, has been published in both Japanese and English. At the University of Osaka he offers courses about media, culture, translation, and Western scholarship on Japan in the Graduate School of Humanities and has a cross-appointment in the Research Division of GJS-ERI.

Travis SEIFMAN

Associate Professor at the Kinugasa Research Organization, Ritsumeikan University

Travis Seifman holds a PhD in History from the University of California, Santa Barbara, as well as graduate degrees from SOAS, University of London (Japanese Studies) and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (Art History). His research focuses on Okinawa, with an emphasis on diplomatic relations between the Lūchū Kingdom and Edo. At Ritsumeikan University he serves as a Research Manager at the Art Research Center.

AKIYAMA Kaori

Assistant Professor of Japanese Studies, University of Osaka

Akiyama Kaori holds a PhD in Japanese History from the Graduate University for Advanced Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Her research examines the experiences of Japanese and Okinawan immigrants and prisoners of war in Hawai'i. At the University of Osaka she teaches modern and contemporary Japanese history from a global perspective, and she has also been an instructor in the university's Global Japanese Studies Program.

Facundo GARASINO

Lecturer at GJS-ERI, University of Osaka

Facundo Garasino holds a PhD in Japanese Studies from the University of Osaka. His research focuses on migration, intellectual and cultural history, and nation-building in Japan and Latin America and has been published in Japanese, English, and Spanish. The volume *A History of Japan and South America Connected by Migration*, which he co-edited, was published by the University of Tokyo Press in 2025. At the University of Osaka Garasino teaches several courses in the Global Japanese Studies Program.

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About the Global Japanese Studies Education and Research Incubator

The University of Osaka GJS-ERI aims to generate new advances in research and education by integrating the benefits of work done in both the humanities and social science disciplines. GJS-ERI promotes interdisciplinary and international research by serving as a platform for the exchange of advanced academic dialogue relating to the study of Japan. Further, GJS-ERI endeavors to translate research results into valuable interdisciplinary and society-oriented educational programs that incorporate the study of Japan as part of an essential foundation for the training of global talent.

About the Consortium for Global Japanese Studies

The Consortium for Global Japanese Studies (CGJS) is Japan's first effort to meet the needs of university research institutes and graduate programs in international Japanese studies and encourage coordination and networking among them. The Consortium aims, through participation in joint research meetings and international symposia relating to global Japanese studies, to serve as an intermediary body that connects the domestic research community to international research networks. Moreover, by promoting joint research and holding international joint research workshops, the Consortium's activities contribute to the training of young scholars and help build the academic foundations of global Japanese studies as a field.

Conference Access

In 2026, the Osaka Graduate Conference in Japanese Studies will be convened in Seminar Rooms 7C/7D of the University of Osaka Nakanoshima Center, located in the center of Osaka City. The Nakanoshima Center, which opened in 2004 and was renovated in 2023, is a facility that supports global knowledge exchange by acting as a hub for society-university and industry-university co-creation, serving as a place where four domains of knowledge (culture, art, science, and technology) intersect. The map below provides general guidance on JR access to the Nakanoshima Center.

