

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE STUDIES PRESENTS

## YOUTH WORK IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

### Abstract

In contemporary Japanese society, the nature of institutional affiliation through work that once secured individual social identity, structured life course, and facilitated social intimacy has changed. As the scope and nature of low-level service work has evolved in the context of post-bubble economic recession, the structure of offices and labor flows have transformed middle- and high level work as well. These structural changes have especially impacted young workers, whose aspirations, skill sets, and career trajectories and strategies has gone through decisive alterations, which has implications beyond the context of the immediate workplace. The collapse of stable distinctions between regular and irregular work, between formal and informal labor, between work and leisure, even between production and consumption, force ethnographers to reconceptualize their understanding of youth labor and its relation to larger structural forces and historical contingencies.

**Date:** Saturday: 2 pm – 5 pm (reception 5pm) / Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm (reception 6pm)  
**Venue:** Temple University, Japan Campus, Mita Hall 5F  
**Admission:** Free (RSVP not required.)  
**Information:** ICJS Office, [icjs@tuj.ac.jp](mailto:icjs@tuj.ac.jp) / TUJ Information Center, [ic@tuj.ac.jp](mailto:ic@tuj.ac.jp)

**Institutional Host:** Kyle Cleveland, Institute of Contemporary Japanese Studies  
Temple University, Japan Campus

**Organizer:** David H. Slater, Sophia University

### SCHEDULE

#### (Saturday, June 27)

2:00 pm - Welcome and Opening Remarks: Kyle Cleveland (Temple University, Japan Campus)

2:00 pm – 5pm

**Plenary Panel:** “*What is the State of Youth Labor in Japan Today?*”  
“*What Contribution Can Ethnography Make to Our Understanding?*”

**Moderator:** David H. Slater (Sophia University)

- Mary Brinton (Harvard University)
- Genda Yuji (Tokyo University)
- Kosugi Reiko (Japan Institute of Labor)

5 pm *Reception*

#### (Sunday, June 28)

10:00 am - 11:30 am

**Panel 1:** *Workplace Ethnographies*

**Chair:** David H. Slater (Sophia University)

- Gavin Hamilton Whitelaw (International Christian University)  
Title: “Konbini-baito: Youth at Work in Transitional Japan”
- Philomena Keet (Hosei University)  
Title: “Aiming High: Youth Employment in Tokyo Fashion”
- Paul Hanson (University of London – SOAS)  
Title: “Milked for All they are Worth: Young Workers and a Hokkaido Dairy Farm”
- Patrick W. Galbraith (Tokyo University)  
Title: “Maid Cafes: Ethnography of Affective Labor”

11:30 am - 1:00 pm (Sunday, June 28)

**Panel 2: *Therapy, Rehabilitation and Training***

**Chair: Amy Borovoy (Princeton University)**

- **Sachiko Horiguchi** (Sophia University)  
Title: "Hikikomori and Psychological Dilemmas of Youth Who 'Cannot Work'"
- **Michael Dzieszinski** (University of Hawaii at Manoa)  
Title: "Building a Working Class Future: Rehabilitating middle-class Hikikomori with Normalized Working-Class Expectations"
- **Wakako Takeda** (Waseda University)  
Title: "Making a Connection with Society: the Idea of Maturity and Independence in Wakamono Jiritsu Shien Jigyo"
- **Hiroki Ichinose** (Tokyo Gakugei University)  
Title: "Counteracting Resistance: The Introduction of Corporate 'Coaching' Training for Managers in Japan"

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm **Lunch**

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

**Panel 3: *Politics of Employment and Unemployment***

**Chair: Akira Suzuki (Hosei University)**

- **Robin O'Day** (University of British Columbia)  
Title: "Furiitaa and Political Mobilization"
- **Shinji Kojima** (University of Hawaii)  
Title: "Struggles Against 'Haken-Giri': The Strategies and Difficulties of Fighting Against the Dismissal of Haken Workers"
- **David-Antoine Malinas** (Tohoku University)  
Title: "Young workers Labor Union and the Revival of Japanese Labor Movement"

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

**Panel 4: *Work/Life Balance***

**Chair: Glenda Roberts (Waseda University)**

- **Carola Hommerich** (German Institute of Japan)  
Title: "The Motivation to Work: Work Values of Young Japanese in Atypical Employment"
- **Emma Cook** (University of London - SOAS)  
Title: "Doomed To Fail? Freeters' Search for a Fulfilling Lifestyle"
- **Vincent Mirza** (McGill University)  
Title: "Young Women in Tokyo and the Changing Definition of Work: Morality, Marriage and Flexible Capitalism"
- **Yuki Imoto** (Keio University)  
Title: "Working as an 'International' Preschool Teacher: Perspectives on the Organization of Gender, Class and Ethnicity in Early Childhood English Education in Japan"
- **Lynne Nakano** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)  
Title: "Unmarried Women at Work: Negotiating Obstacles and Opportunities"

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm **Wrap Up and Future Directions**

6:00 pm **Reception**

**WAKAI PROJECT**

Produced by the Institute of Contemporary Japanese Studies's Wakai Project at Temple University, Japan Campus. Wakai provides a forum for students to interact with cultural innovators, advance serious discussion about social issues and problems facing young people, and impact social policy and debates concerning the status of youth in Japan. The network of universities and educational institutions that Wakai draws on provides academic grounding to popular culture issues, and allows students to integrate their academic and social lives.

**Institute of Contemporary Japanese Studies: Wakai Project**

Temple University, Japan Campus

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