

About the seminar outline

<Faculty of Economics>

Instructor : YASUTAKE Taeko

Profile : <https://www.soka.ac.jp/en/faculty-profiles/taeko-yasutake/>

Progressive Seminar I, II, III

We learn basic principle of finance and the role of financial systems in the economy through this seminar. Students will take turn in presenting a chapter of the textbook. Students are also expected to participate in discussions actively. We spend two semesters, Seminar I and Seminar II to read the textbook. In Seminar III, each student (or in a group) choose a topic of their interest and conduct mini-research on the topic.

<Faculty of Law>

Instructor : HANSSEN Ulv

Profile : <https://www.soka.ac.jp/en/faculty-profiles/ulv-hanssen/>

This seminar is conducted in English and focuses on global issues. By global issues we mean issues that impact a large number of countries. Another characteristic of global issues is therefore that their solution requires multilateral cooperation. While the specific issues we focus on can change from semester to semester depending on the world situation, in recent years we have studied global issues such as populism, the coronavirus, terrorism, nuclear weapons, and automation. The seminar seeks to involve the students in the planning and in the third semester, the students get to choose the topics themselves.

A typical class consists of discussing a text on a global issue. We seek to understand what the problem is, who it affects, why it occurs, and how it should be solved. Since we have students from many different countries, it is an excellent opportunity to experience different ways of thinking and learn about relevant cases from other countries. All students give one presentation per semester and write a final report at the end of the semester. The seminar aims to create a friendly atmosphere for learning in which all students can actively participate and share their opinions.

<Faculty of Letters>

Instructor : FISKE-NIELSEN Anne Mette

Profile : <https://www.soka.ac.jp/en/faculty-profiles/fisker-nielsen/>

This term we begin with reviewing some of the topics of last year's study and talk about how to develop a research topic for the graduation thesis. We also start the term by discussing a short anthropological take on the practice of `meishi`, or Japanese business cards. What might

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this seemingly little piece of paper tell us about wider norms, values, and social practices? This is a fun reading, but it also carries some important points about methodology, which we consider in weeks 2 and 3 reading some studies about "Happiness" in Japanese contexts. Students will learn that without consideration the sociocultural context, the use of statistical data usually used to indicate levels of "Happiness" by international comparisons, may in fact not tell us that much, even be misleading. We begin to consider the merits of more in depth research methods without which our understanding and analysis tend to be rather superficial.

In week 4, 5 and 6 we work on very contemporary changes occurring in Japanese society - some have referred to as competition of the imaginary. Here we look at some chapters from Jennifer Robertson's recent book called *Robo Sapiens Japonicus*. What does the way AI is moving into people's lives tell us about so-called post-human societies? What do living with Robots tell us about Gender, Family, and the Japanese Nation? This allows us to think through how identity, status, gender, and class are changing and simultaneously maintaining the production of the nation-state. We also consider how AI may be creating new religious practices and changing cyborg-human identities.

Another key issue in Japan is the increasing diversity and migration, the way labour and globalisation challenge Japanese societal norms, what it means to be Japanese and Japan's role in the world community. We consider how Civil Society in Japan play a key role in both undermining and supporting the state and the nation. The last topic before the mid-term essay will focus on Shinto and approaches to death as cultural roots of Japan, and we take up some of the debates about Japanese culture and Japanese religions and how far such categorisation is valid as a form of social analysis.

From week 9 onwards, students will begin to focus on designing their own research topic, discussing in class specific research you have read relevant to your chosen topic. Each week students will be expected to have read one article of relevance to a possible topic for your graduation thesis. The student will present the key argument and issues in class. We will end the term with you submitting draft parts of a literature review to be used for your graduation thesis according to the readings you have done on your topic so far.