Sociocultural Divisions in Contemporary Japan
Fall 2020 Thu 2:00-4:50 PM
Online Class

Some readings in this syllabus are subject to change.

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Office Hours: BN140-1 #510 or Zoom meeting, Wed 10AM~12PM or by appointment

Class Description and Objectives
This seminar aims to examine sociocultural stratifications in contemporary Japan by particularly focusing on the two social categories of class and (youth) generation. It is undeniably important to understand Japan’s sociocultural inequality in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and race. In this seminar, however, these issues are only slightly dealt with since they were tackled in the last spring semester. Instead, in this semester, we are going to explore Japan’s social and cultural divisions through the lens of social class and younger generation because, I think, post-bubble Japanese society has been divided along the line of classes and also its socioeconomic burdens have been disproportionately put on the shoulders of younger generation since the 1990s. Referring to anthropological and sociological literatures on the two topics, therefore, we will attempt to make sense of how the so-called “all middle class society” has gradually transformed into divided society.

Reading Materials
The class materials include book chapters from the following lists as well as articles from academic journals like Social Science Japan Journal. Most of the reading materials will be electronically provided on the ETL, http://etl.snu.ac.kr/.

Course Requirement and Grading
This seminar will be conducted as participatory discussion as well as lecture and presentation, in which we are all intensively engaged with readings. Therefore, every member in this seminar including me MUST read ALL the assigned readings in each week and prepared to actively participate in discussion.

In order to facilitate your engagement with the readings and your participation in class, you are required to submit a response paper to the instructor by 10 AM on EVERY Thursday. You can submit your response paper on the form of online text or file attachment on the ETL.

The response paper does not need to be long. One single-spaced page or less is good enough. You are recommended to include two or three paragraphs of questions and/or critiques about main arguments in the readings rather than simply summarizing their arguments. In so doing, you would explain why the questions are relevant to understand the readings rather than just raising them.

Grades will be given by evaluating individual response papers, presentations, participation in class discussion and attendance overall.
**Class Format**

Class format may include a brief lecture, an individual presentation and an intensive discussion. This seminar will be held online until SNU will allow us to safely hold off-line classes without much inconvenience.

First, I will give a lecture on the readings and give you a chance to ask some quick questions on my lecture before fully discussing all relevant questions and problems. It takes about 50 minutes to complete this lecture and question session.

Second, one student will give a presentation based on his or her own response paper. You can raise three or more questions which we will discuss. You should explain on what contexts you raise the questions, whereby we can be fully engaged with them. Even though you do not need to prepare a beautiful presentation, it would be great if you can prepare a short and simple presentation on which you just copy your questions from your response paper. It may take about 20 minutes to complete your presentation.

Third, after taking a short break, we will participate in intensive discussion based on your presentation as well as my lecture. We will discuss the questions which you raised earlier and then move onto other questions. Of course, you are welcomed to add new and various questions during our discussion. The intensive discussion does not mean that you should speak up as much as you can. Instead, listening to others’ argument carefully and adding your opinion to that can be a way of participating in class discussion. It is important to respect other classmates in order to promote a helpful discussion during the seminar.

**Class Schedule**

1\textsuperscript{st} week September 3 Introduction

I. Class

2\textsuperscript{nd} week September 10 Various Approaches to Class


3\textsuperscript{rd} week September 17 Divided Society and Poverty in Japan

Blind, Georg D, and Stefania Lottanti von Mandach. 2015. “Decades not lost, but won:
increased employment, higher wages, and more equal opportunities in the Japanese labour market.”  


4th week September 24 Equality of Opportunity and Outcome


5th week October 1 Korean Thanksgiving Holliday

6th week October 8 Educational Aspiration Divided


7th week October 15 Non-Regular Workers


8th week October 22 Day Laborers


9th week October 29 The Young and Female Homeless


Cassegård, Carl. 2014. “Space, Art and Homelessness” Youth Movements, Trauma and

II. Generation and the Youth

10th week November 5 Generation and Generationalism


11th week November 12 Discourses on Japanese Youths


12th week November 19 Precarious Youths (1): Non-regular workers


13th week November 26 Precarious Youth (2): NEET and Hikikomori

Genda, Yuji. 2007. “Jobless Youths and the NEET Problem in Japan.” Social Science Japan


14th week December 3 Precarious Youths (3): Political Responses to Youth Precarity


15th week December 10 Local Youths (1)


16th week December 17 Local Youths (2)


