

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

OTAKU CULTURE IN JAPAN AND ITS  
TRANSNATIONAL RELATION

Lecturer(s)	SUGIURA, KAZUNORI
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2025 Fall
Day/Period	Fri.3
Campus	Mita
Classroom	411
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	45000
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Grade Type	S, A, B, C, D
K-Number	CIN-CO-00133-212-86

▼ Detail

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

"Anime", "Comic", and "Game" are some of the aggressive and innovative forms of popular culture spreading throughout the world. Japan is one of the major countries influencing this unique popular culture with its creativity. Enthusiast of such popular culture are defined as “Otaku”. It also delivers a new sense of atmosphere in terms of "Kawaii", and "Moe". These so called “Otaku” cultures are now focused throughout the globe and giving Japan an important role to enhance its innovative creativity. These contents and subcultures distributed from Japan have created trans-national cultural boom referred to as “Cool Japan” and now creating an inevitable cultural influence. Furthermore, political strategy suggests favorable international competitiveness to claim these cultural deliverable as the seeds of creativity influencing its national branding.

Objective of this course is to understand how the roots of these Otaku cultural activities in Japan have expanded internationally as one of Simulacra with creators, and activists of the fields: How the technology has been created and knowing its real motivation to drive these sub-cultural activities. This course will first address the backgrounds and characteristics as well as its innovative expansion of “Otaku” culture recognized internationally, that were once born in the age of competing creativity that comes from Social Darwinism inherent during the phase of its economic growth and development of Japan.

We will share the history of “Otaku Culture” and its technology in Japan from three perspectives. 1) Potential of expression process 2) Digital Content technologies that are being applied 3) Breakthrough of “Otaku Culture” influenced by Trans-nationalization and Internationalization. We will learn the creation process of media contents, games, and expressions for the next generation, especially learning and understanding technologies and methods to become a representative of “Otaku Culture creator and producers”. We will discuss with participants, the next generation evolving reinvented, recreated animation, games, and expression contents produced internationally outside of Japan, especially from Asia. This course will also introduce you to get use to the views, methodologies, and ideologies based on “Otaku” with practical evidence, together with knowing the route in psychological process of satisfying desire and greed with its Otaku creativity.

Active Learning Methods [Description](#)

Fieldwork

## Course Plan

### Lesson 1

**“Japanese Otaku Culture Surrounded and Distributed in Akihabara”** There are always relations between the Japanese “Otaku Culture” and its distributed location. “Akihabara” is one of the areas in Japan making an excessive influence on “Otaku Culture”. The first three weeks of this course will start out with introduction, and understanding a place called “Akihabara” in Tokyo: a presentation layer of Japanese “Otaku Culture”. We will also learn the “Shift”, “Change” and “Transformation” in Akihabara to analyze based on social cultural perspective. We will also share virtual tour to “Akihabara” with videos. During this virtual tour, we will check the co-existence of “Media Contents (Software)”, “Hardware” and “Service” in Akihabara, influencing and re-inventing each other creating endless cycle of evolution.

### Lesson 2

#### **"Akihabara Tour"**

We will be creating a group. The entire group will be going to Akihabara as a walking tour with some of the themes discussed on first class. During the tour, we will check the co-existence of “Media Contents (Software)”, “Hardware” and “Service” influencing and re-inventing each other creating endless cycle of evolution inside “Akihabara” We will also keep in mind its changes in evolution while we do our next tour in the latter half of this course in spare time. Please note it is not mandatory to join this Akihabara tour if you are already a frequent Akihabara tourist.

### Lesson 3

#### **"Summary of Akihabara Culture"**

We will summarize the characteristics of Akihabara based on the tour last week, Understanding how Akihabara has been a place suitable for Otaku.

### Lesson 4

#### **"Video Game Console and Gaming Industries Part 1"**

Nearly 40 Years have passed since video games has infiltrated in our culture. Second day, we will look into the history of game industries to know the creative evolution with its technologies behind. The interactive design, including game design, are “transparent design” which you cannot see in reality, but within the game itself. We will learn the implementation of these designs rooted on psychological desire, sense and physical instinct of “Otaku”. Meritocracy coupled together with metacognition are also important factors on video gaming.

### Lesson 5

#### **"Video Game Console and Gaming Industries Part 2"**

Understanding Cosumer Gaming Consoles.

### Lesson 6

#### **"Gaming and Network"**

Networks, connecting computers on both ends, actually connected a peoples’ interaction that are using them. This session will introduce the figurative implementation based upon Japanese “Omotenashi” pursue and technology used in the network games.

### Lesson 7

#### **"Doujin and Comike Part 1"**

Creative contents sold in Comike (Comic Market) and Doujin conventional events are the essence for the Otaku people in Japan and now spreading worldwide. We will learn the kinds of contents being created and distributed in such events, and also know the facts, motives, and technologies of the most famous and attractive otaku events of

all: “Comike”, more than 650 Thousand people participate in only 3 days. We will also look into the management and operation process of such “Otaku” event.

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## Lesson 8

### "Otaku Event Management"

Otaku is somewhat socialized people. we will discuss about how otaku events are being handled and managed.

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## Lesson 9

### "Cosplay and Event"

"Role-playing" to become Anime and Comic character is once given birth by the "board game" ages. Japanese Otaku cultures have evolved such “role-playing” to one of MR (Mixed Reality) transparent expression. We will understand the expression techniques, technologies of “Cosplay”, and also seek into rational desires contained in its expressions. Anime and Comike cultures have given new expression to creativity.

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## Lesson 10

### "Kigurumi"

Kigurumi is a new expression scheme to become a character of contents. In this session, we seek how otaku kigurumi enthusiasts experience the kigurumi culture.

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## Lesson 11

### "Creative Expression (Ita-sha and ETC)"

Majority of Otaku creations are disclosed and presented to public as a work of art and as a cultural expression. We will seek the evolution principle of Otaku culture based on handicap principle expressed by Amotz Zahavi. We focus on Designs of “痛車(Ita-sha or Ouch Cars), decorating stickers or directly painting an Anime characters to body of the car. What are the psychological backgrounds and motivations to create such art? What are the creative technologies used for creation? How can we apply these powers to new innovations?

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## Lesson 12

### "Idol and Passionate/Braves:漢(おとこ), Instinct, sense, and desire Part 1"

Otaku(Wotaku) motivated from Idols are also called as Passionate /Braves: “漢(おとこ)”. Within these practices of ever-changing popularity against the collection of idols, we will seek into its management and stealth marketing strategy to keep these Wotaku in a position to support Idol (Ideal) world. With a specific example, we will also discuss the limitation in the Idol market based on its capitalism society of passionate Wotaku organizational cohesion community equipped with its social Darwinism.

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## Lesson 13

### "Moe, Simulacra, Desire, and Motivation"

What is “Moe(萌え)”? With specific example of creation from pop cultures, we will seek for the hints of its origins and essence. Why is there a culture that created a character called “Otokonoko(男の娘)”: a Boy in cute girls’ outfit? With a mixture of the pop culture and the Real world that we live in, we will evaluate a form of “Moe” based upon some of the perspective such as a life given from creation of “Lolicon: Lolita Complex”, and “Shota” or the personification of inorganic forms(擬人化).

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## Lesson 14

### "Future of Otaku"

Contents created by so called “Cool Japan” does not originate from Japan, but from all over the world. We will see how the origins of Japanese pop culture have re-innovated and developed outside of Japan and now re-influencing the Japanese pop culture.

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## Other

### Wrap ups.

With all the classes we discussed, we will summarize this course to recognize the collaborative possibilities based on Otaku pop cultural activities.

## Method of Evaluation

Evaluation Scheme will be as follows:

- 1) Participants to the class, attendance questions
- 2) Submission of Assignments/Reports

## Textbooks

Text books and materials will be announced during the lectures.

## Reference Books

Text books and materials will be announced during the lectures.

## Lecturer's Comments to Students

This lecture will be held in English, and if required, in Japanese as well. Some of the terminology will be in Japanese (You will need to learn some Otaku terminology in Japanese as well as in English).

In this course, the use of generative AI tools (e.g., Gemini, NotebookLM) is actively encouraged. By utilizing generative AI, students can enhance their learning outcomes through information collection, planning of assignment structures, and improvement of written expression.

Please follow these rules when using AI:

- Always verify and revise AI-generated content as needed
- Clearly state the name of the AI tool used and the purpose of its use
- Do not use prompts that include copyrighted materials or personal information of others

## Question/Comments

TARGET SCOPE:

Target of this workshop is for whom wishes to know further on

- \* Japanese Otaku Culture in General
- \* How endless seeds of creativity are born
- \* Internationalization and Trans-national "Otaku Culture"
- \* Knowing from "Comike": World's Largest Otaku Gatherings
- \* How it is being managed and steered
- \* Knowing the Participants of the event
- \* Understanding the future of "Comike"
- \* Knowing the technology and techniques behind Otaku
- \* Digitalization process of Comics and Anime
- \* Cosplay, Kigurumi "Technologies"

Assuming Target:

- \* Undergraduates and Graduates:
  - College of Arts and Science
    - Asian Studies (Especially Japanese and Asian Cultures)
  - Computer Science
    - Computer Games, Game Theory, Gaming Industries
    - Communications, Network Technology(Infrastructure)
  - Economics
    - Consumption Society
    - Creative Economics
  - Film Studies
    - Amateur filming
    - Anime and Animation
  - Humanities, Psychologies, Sociology
    - Age of Post Moratorium
  - Japanese
    - Japanese culture
  - Philosophy
    - Logics and Ethics of Otaku Culture

Media Studies, Media Production

Technology, Arts, and Media

\* Whom have interests in “Otaku Culture”

\* Whom involved in “Otaku” Activities