

## **MJHW (Online Meeting) on Discourses of Normality and Contemporary Japanese Fiction - Friday, October 9th**

Announcement published by Joelle Nazzicone on Tuesday, September 29, 2020

Type:

Workshop

Subject Fields:

Japanese History / Studies, Literature, Women's & Gender History / Studies

Please join us for the next meeting of the Modern Japan History Workshop on **Friday, October 9th at 6 pm JST**. Our presenter this month will be Laura Clark (The University of Queensland; Showa Women's University), who will present her work on discourses of normality and contemporary Japanese fiction (details below).

This month's session will be held online through ZOOM, and can be accessed using the following sign-in information:

Meeting link: <https://zoom.us/j/99647492269>

The password for the meeting will be posted at the top of the [MJHW website](#) from October 5th onwards.

The workshop is open to all, and no prior registration is required.

Please direct any questions to Joelle Tapas at [tapas@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:tapas@fas.harvard.edu). We hope to see you there!

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### **Discourses of normality, the demarcated life path, and contemporary Japanese fiction: Kawakami Hiromi, Motoya Yukiko and Murata Sayaka**

*Laura Clark, The University of Queensland, School of Languages and Cultures; Showa Women's University, Institute of Women's Culture*

What does a 'normal' and 'successful' life look like in contemporary Japan? This paper explores some answers to this question by looking at the fictional works of three contemporary authors: Kawakami Hiromi, Motoya Yukiko and Murata Sayaka. Spanning across the 'lost decades' these works demonstrate unresolved tensions in contemporary Japanese society in the face of 'common sense' discourses of work, marriage, and adulthood, which factor in neither individual contexts nor barriers to access. Yet, these characters seek to carve out a liveable life within their fictional worlds, and employ these same discourses to both construct and understand their paths and the options available to them, often to their own disadvantage. Taking a discourse analysis approach this paper explores how these characters engage with the heteronormative demarcated life path, encountering labour precarity, and tensions over marriage timing, and marital dissatisfaction. These works

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produce a range of portraits which both embrace and contest a shared understanding of what a 'successful' life can look like from the outside, and yet how complex it is to enact from within. In the worlds of fiction we see social norms and values spring to life, and so by placing these works within context we can broaden our understanding of these works as well as the cultural landscape from which they emerge.