

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

Joint DIJ Social Science & History and Humanities Study Group

January 20, 2016, 18:30

Chelsea Szendi Schieder, Meiji University

“Coeds Ruining the Nation”:

The Contested Postwar Politics of the Female Student

The American Occupation government's (1945-1952) radical reform program to “democratize” Japanese society from above included the end of a government ban on coeducation above the primary level that had been in place since 1876. The presence of young women in formerly homosocial institutions of higher education introduced new conversations on the potential and also disruptive dangers of young female participation in politics and higher education.

In this talk, I consider debates on the role of the female student - a middle-class identity in an increasingly self-identified middle-class society - that circulated in the mass media of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In some contexts, such as the mass demonstrations against the US-Japan Security Treaty, female students became idealized as a new hope for postwar democracy. However, female students also became the symbol for a host of anxieties about massification and democratization in higher education in the early 1960s in a widely publicized “Theory of Coeds Ruining the Nation” outlined by a Waseda University professor. I examine the terms of these debates, through which public intellectuals struggled to define the ideal Japanese democratic subject that was supposed to supersede the imperial subject. What can the history of integrating women into higher education in postwar Japan tell us about the challenges posed by the promise of radical democracy and the demands of a rapidly changing industrial society? What might that mean for conceptualizing the tensions between a universal versus a particular image of the democratic subject?

Chelsea Szendi Schieder is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and Economics at Meiji University. She obtained her Ph.D. in Modern Japanese History from Columbia University in 2014. She is currently working on her book, tentatively titled *Coed Revolution*, on the political meaning of female student participation in postwar student activism in Japan.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is organized by Steffen Heinrich, Phoebe Holdgrün and Daniel Kremers.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is organized by Miki Aoyama-Olschina and Torsten Weber.

All are welcome to attend, but registration (holdgruen@diptokyo.org) is appreciated.

German Institute for Japanese Studies Tokyo (DIJ)

Jōchi Kioizaka Bldg. 2F, 7-1 Kioichō, Chiyoda-ku, Tōkyō 102-0094, Phone: 03-3222-5077

**For a map please refer to
www.dijtokyo.org/access**

