

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group



October 7, 2026, 6.30 pm (JST)

Serial Solitudes: Exploring Loneliness in Japanese Discourses and Screen Culture

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My research on loneliness starts from the assumption that loneliness is not only an individual psychological experience, but also a socially and culturally shaped phenomenon articulated through different forms of knowledge. I therefore combine two forms of discourse analysis: scholarly debates on loneliness and audiovisual representations in films and television series. Taken together, they offer a broader understanding of how loneliness is conceptualized, represented and socially negotiated. The project *Serial Solitudes: Audiovisual Cultures of Loneliness and Belonging in Contemporary Japan* transfers this approach to Japan by bringing Japanese scholarly discourses into dialogue with audiovisual worlds of solitude, withdrawal and belonging. The presentation introduces the project at an early stage and uses the Study Group to discuss its methodological design. A key challenge is gaining systematic access to Japanese vocabulary and literature on loneliness without reducing the field to familiar concepts such as *hikikomori* or *kodokushi*. To address this, a source-based text-mining workflow supported by language models is being developed around sixty Japanese books, supplemented by Japanese translations of influential Western works. The digitized texts are systematically processed and incorporated into a structured database, allowing relevant passages, concepts, recurring patterns and connections to be identified across the corpus and subsequently checked against their original sources. The presentation will outline the workflow, show preliminary examples, and invite discussion of its possibilities and limitations.

Denis Newiak is a media, film and television scholar and postdoctoral researcher at Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg. His research focuses on modern loneliness, television and seriality, audiovisual cultures, and the social imaginaries of contemporary societies. He is the author of *Loneliness in Series* (2026) and *The Lonelinesses of Modernity* (2024), and has taught and conducted research in Japan, including at Sophia University in Tokyo. His current work explores Japanese discourses and audiovisual representations of loneliness, social withdrawal, and belonging from a transcultural media studies perspective.

About:

The DIJ Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines conducting research on contemporary or modern Japan. The event is open to all. This session is organized by Barbara Holthus.

This is a public event. Please be aware that audio-visual recordings may be made, stored, and published during and after the event.

On-site only event:

For participation, please register via email to holthus@dijtokyo.org until October 6, 2026.

Venue:

DIJ Tokyo: <https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/>