

Forging a Path through Uncharted Territory: On Creating Women's Studies

Sociologist, Professor Emerita of the University of Tokyo,
Former Chief Director of the Certified Non-Profit Organization
Women's Action Network (WAN),
and Representative Director of the Ueno Chizuko Foundation

Chizuko Ueno



Nagoya University Lecture
2026.12.19(Sat.) 14:00 – 16:40
[Toyoda Auditorium]



For details and
registration,
please check the
website.

Gender studies was born out of feminism, which is certainly one of the most influential movements of the 20th century. In my lecture, I will discuss the new paths gender studies has opened up, the battles it continues to fight, and the goals it aims to achieve.

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A half a century ago, when I was a student, women's studies did not exist. Then, sociologist Inoue Teruko brought women's studies from the US to Japan, calling it Joseigaku and defining it as studies on women, by women, and for women. Her definition caused controversy at the time. Women's studies was a form of social activism, born outside of the academy, that gradually entered into academic institutions. I became a member of the Women's Studies Society of Japan in Kyoto and helped it publish its first journal, encouraging women to become both its writers and readers. Then, men's studies followed, which later integrated with women's studies to form gender studies. Since no social spaces are untouched by gender, there are no fields that gender studies cannot deal with.

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Born in 1948 in Toyama Prefecture, Japan. Obtained a Ph.D. in sociology from the Dept. of Sociology, Graduate School of Kyoto University. Posts include: Associate professor at Heian Women's College (1979-1989), Research fellow in the Dept. of Anthropology at Northwestern University (1982) and at the University of Chicago (1983), Associate professor at Kyoto Seika University (1989-1993), Visiting scholar at the International Center for Japanese Studies (1991-1993), Visiting professor at the University of Bonn, Germany (1991), Visiting professor at British Columbia University (1990, 1994), Visiting Professor at El Colegio de Mexico (1996), and Visiting Professor at Barnard College, Columbia University (1996).

Additional posts include: Associate professor at the University of Tokyo (1993-1995), Professor at the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, the University of Tokyo (1996-2011), and Special invited professor at Ritsumeikan University (2012-2016).

She is a pioneer in women's studies and specializes in feminist theory, family and sexuality. Her current research topic is care of the elderly.

Memberships include: Member, Science Council of Japan (2005-2014); Associate Member, Science Council of Japan (2015-present); Member, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2020-present).

Awards and honors include: Suntory Award for Academic Publication (for "Rise and Fall of the Japanese Modern Family") (1994); Asahi Award (for contributions to feminism and gender studies and theory and practice of care) (2011); and Han Honour, Finish Government (2019). Elected as one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2025 by the TIMES.

Main publications include: "Patriarchy and capitalism" (1990), "Nationalism and Gender" (1998), "The Autonomy of Social Minorities" (2003, 2024), "Thought for Survival" (2006), "Misogyny in Japan" (2010), and "Sociology of Care" (2011). Her series of books on aging single individuals—"Old Days of Single Ladies" (2006), "How to Live Old Days for Single Men" (2009), and "The End of Life of Old Single Ladies" (2015)—became best sellers. Her latest publication is "Anti-Anti-Aging" (2025). Many of her books have been translated into Chinese and have become influential among Chinese readers.

English Translations:

Chizuko Ueno, Beverley Yamamoto transl., *Nationalism and Gender* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2004)

Chizuko Ueno, *The Modern Family in Japan: Its Rise and Fall* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2009)