

# Special Symposium for the Global Studies in Japanese Cultures Program (JCulP) “Globalizing Japanese Culture”

## Foreword

From April 2017, a new program called Global Studies in Japanese Cultures Program (JCulP) was created in Transcultural Studies at the School of Culture, Media and Society (SCMS). This symposium was held to commemorate its inauguration.

JCulP is the first English-language degree program established in the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences (FLAS), with the aim to “train specialists in Japanese culture from a global perspective and foster individuals who can spread their knowledge to the rest of the world.” Each cohort is comprised of thirty students: one half of them graduates from high schools in Japan, the other half graduates from high schools overseas. They study Japanese culture together from a variety of perspectives, and all program courses are conducted in English. In addition, students who graduated from high schools in Japan are required to take other courses taught in English to fulfill the majority of the credits they need for graduation. However, the basic curriculum structure and course procedures are the same as other SCMS programs: students take seminars from their second year and research seminars to work on a graduation thesis from their third year.

To implement and operate this program, FLAS has already engaged as full-time faculty members three professors who had been teaching Japanese culture and literature at American universities. Namely, the three panelists today, Professors Hitomi Yoshio (from Florida International University, appointed in September 2016), Pau Pitarch-Fernandez (from Queens College, City University of New York, appointed in September 2017), and Shiho Takai (from the University of Florida, appointed in September 2017). As for their specializations, Professor Yoshio’s are Japanese modern and contemporary literature, gender studies, translation; Professor Pitarch-Fernandez’s are Japanese modern and contemporary literature, comparative literature, narrative studies; Professor Takai’s are classical Japanese literature, early modern Japanese theater, comparative literature. They are all energetic researchers who greatly contribute to lowering the average age of the full-time faculty members at FLAS. Furthermore, all three have earned their doctorates from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, which has been at the forefront of Japanese literature research in the United States. This reflects the long history of exchanges and collaboration between Waseda and Columbia, starting with our university’s own Ryūsaku Tsunoda, who founded Japanese studies at Columbia University, to the double-degree program between our graduate schools established in recent years. You can say that the cooperation will now become even closer.

Of course, Yoshio, Pitarch-Fernandez, and Takai were not hired by the university under the expectation that they would simply teach for the program. Just like JCulP aims to escape from preconceptions and re-interpret Japanese culture as if it were a different culture through the medium of English, the three of them are strongly expected to bring a fresher and more radical approach, and a much wider perspective, to the university’s Japanese studies and Japanese literature research. The start of JCulP is not just the establishment of a new educational program, but also the attainment of a springboard for the further advancement of research activities in the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

In this symposium, we focused on the first common theme we can see from that springboard: “Globalizing Jap-

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anese Culture.” After the presentations, there was a discussion and question-and-answer session with three discussants. The English title “Globalizing Japanese Culture” aims at a double meaning, in which “Japanese Culture” can be both the subject or the object of “Globalizing.” The three presentations embody this double meaning, not only providing information about the current state of Japanese culture’s acceptance in the world, but also by looking at translations, publications, and education to see the attempts to globalize Japanese culture, illuminating and broadening the scene before participants’ eyes.

On that day, more than twenty JCulP students who enrolled this academic year attended the conference, sitting front-row center, listening to the presentations eagerly and asking questions. It is unknown how much this was due to the teachers’ approach, but one can say that the lively atmosphere was a good example of the close teacher-student interaction that the transcultural studies conference represents.

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