Some of the most critical discussions about society in Japan today are channeled through concerns about children and youth. Japanese media constantly worry about the young generation: They claim that boys and girls no longer want to grow up; that new technologies have made them afraid of engaging with mainstream adult society; that men no longer aspire to a white-collar career and steady middle-class life; and that women no longer want to marry and have babies and instead live with their parents for much longer than ever before. The last twenty years or so have also been marked by a recession and, more recently, by an international financial crisis. In April 2011, northeastern Japan was hit by an earthquake and a tsunami, followed by a nuclear crisis. This triple disaster further exacerbated a widespread sense of decline and fear of the future.

Against the backdrop of these broader, longstanding developments, this course examines some of the more prominent current perspectives on children and youth. We will begin by examining the question whether childhood is indeed disappearing as some social commentators have proclaimed (seminar 1). Then, we will analyze concerns about boys who, according to Japanese and worldwide public discourse no longer want to grow up (seminar 2). Girls are no less scrutinized by the older generation of social critics and, thus, we will look at some of the particularly “bad” ones (seminar 3). However tortured and superficial, progressive and scary Japanese youth culture looks to their elders, it has been going global. Hence, we will complete this seminar series by tracing that specific globalization and its implications for children and youth in Japan and around the globe (seminar 4).

The seminars sessions are organized in a threefold matter, including lecture, screening of film clips, and discussions of the readings in conjunction with lectures and films. If you wish to contact Professor Frühstück, please feel free to do so at fruhstuck@eastasian.ucsb.edu.

Seminar 1 (June 25)

Is Childhood Disappearing? Families and Schools


Screening of Kokoyakum: High School Baseball.
Seminar 2 (June 26)
Will These Boys Become Men? Hikikomori, Otaku, NEET and Other Challenges to Mainstream Masculinity


Screening of Train Man.

Seminar 3 (June 27)
Bad Girls? Parasaito Singuru and Why Girls Want to (Primarily) Have Fun and Careers


Screening of Kamikaze Girls.

Seminar 4 (June 28)
Reinventions of Childhood and Youth: Japanese Youth Culture Goes Global


