

2019 Graduation Essay Awards

The British and American Cultural Studies Program makes awards each year to 4th year students for the best graduation essays. All seminar supervisors may submit selections of the year's best work. The awards recognize excellence in research and writing. The research activities of the three English seminars supervised by Professors Armstrong, Boulanger and Piccolo are summarized below along with each professor's selection of the best research essay for 2019. BACS would like to congratulate this year's winners. A larger selection of graduation essays in Japanese and in English can be found in *the BACS 2019 Graduation Thesis Collection*.

Professor Armstrong's Seminar

Film analysis and film history, Indigenous peoples, social justice, and immigration were the main research themes in my seminar in 2019. The specific topics selected by students were original and interesting, and the quality of the research overall was very high. A number of students showed exceptional skills in written expression, analysis and organization.

Yushi Suzuki and Akari Kojima focused on the experience of

Japanese Canadians. Yushi researched the first generation of Japanese immigrants to Canada with emphasis on the push factors that sent them to North America, their experience of hardship and discrimination in Canada as well as the larger diplomatic context of Japan and Canada on issues of immigration. Akari, on the other hand, wrote about film-maker Linda Ohama and her award-winning docudrama *Obachan's Garden*, released by the National Film Board of Canada in 2003. Akari provided a thoughtful analysis of the film's combination of archival footage, dramatic reenactment, and documentary as well as the evocative imagery of the film as part of her exploration of one picture bride's attempt to forge a modern identity for herself in Canada.

Momoko Sugiyama and Chiaki Kurebayashi also focused on film. Momoko chose 2018's blockbuster bio-pic *Bohemian Rhapsody* while Chiaki explored the history of African American women in cinema and the role of "race films" in African-American uplift. Momoko's analysis focused the struggles of the rock supergroup Queen and their charismatic lead singer Freddie Mercury. Momoko provided a detailed analysis of how the film told the story of Freddie's struggle for identity and the band's quest to change the shape of rock music while also finding commercial success. Chiaki explored a chapter of American film history that is not so well known: the struggle of African-American actors to break the racists stereotypes ("mammies" and "jezebels") in which Hollywood often cast them. She discussed the successes and struggles of several women in Holly-

wood as well as production of "race films" by pioneer film-maker Oscar Micheaux, whose films which offered messages of uplift to African American audiences.

Megumi Hoshi and Kakeru Ashida wrote on Canada's indigenous peoples: Megumi on British Columbia's Haida; Kakeru on the Cree of Quebec. Megumi focused on indigenous efforts to revitalize their culture, namely, the revival of Haida arts under the leadership of Bill Reid and Paul Megumi's essay showed how successive generations of Haida artists after Bill Reid have worked to recover and reinterpret their arts for modern times. Kakeru's research also focused the theme of indigenous revitalization, but on a boarder scale. He examined current efforts of revitalization of the Cree language as part of a larger nation-building project in the Cree communities of northern Quebec, including employment and housing. Kakeru showed evidence of wide research and skillful organization of the topic combined with solid writing.

Yuriko Yoshikawa produced an exceptional piece of research on the topic of "Restorative Justice Approach to Youth Crime and Violence in South Africa." Yuriko's work stands out for the depth of her exploration of the topic and the passion for the subject that she shows in her writing. For these reasons, I have selected her essay for publication here as the best essay of 2019. I would like to congratulate all of my students for their dedication to the work of research and writing, and for their patient cooperation in this year-long project. All essays from my seminar can be read in *BACS 2019 Thesis Collection*.