2021 Graduation Essay Awards

The British and American Cultural Studies Program makes awards each year to fourth-year students for the best graduation research essays. The awards recognize excellence in research and writing. All seminar supervisors may submit their selections for the year's best work. 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 2021. 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 2021 Graduation Thesis Collection.

Professor Armstrong's Seminar

This year's research work by students in my fourth-year seminar was exceptional in many ways. The research topics were timely and compelling, and all students showed great passion for their topics. Students worked diligently on their projects and produced work of very high quality. In short, the seminar was pleasure to teach, and it will remain in my memory as one of the best I have taught at Chukyo. I would like to thank the students

for their dedication and professionalism—amid the many difficulties of the COVID crisis—and for all that I have learned from their research.

Issues of gender and race were prominent themes in this year's research. In her essay, "Diversity from the Perspective of Feminism: The Ideal Female Image Analyzed from the Movies *Mona Lisa Smile* and *Wonder Woman*," Mito Suzumura writes about the image of independent women in second- and third-wave feminism, analyzing two representative contemporary American films for their portrayals of modern women and discussing how feminism can "lead to the realization of modern diverse society." Shiori Mizutani's essay "Poverty in Bangladesh: Gender Discrimination and Women's Empowerment" focuses on a wide range of problems faced by women in Bangladesh. Drawing on documentary film, an interview with women in Bangladesh and national and international movements, Shiori and explores the effects of poverty on women's life chances while also discussing efforts to combat colorism and violence as well as gender discrimination in education and in the work place.

Ryosuke Nakamura's research focused on the dark legacy of residential schools in Canada. In his essay, he examines how the Canadian government and Indigenous communities have addressed the intergenerational trauma suffered by survivors of the schools and their descendants, examining programs of support through the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program (IRS RHSP) and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF). I wish a greater number of Canadians could

have the same level of understanding as Ryosuke has shown in his research. As he writes in his essay, "I have learned through this research that we need to recognize the terrible history and ongoing impact of residential schools as well as the fact that Indigenous people are trying to move forward.... understanding them can bring about taking action to support Indigenous communities." Hikaru Ishikawa produced first-rate research on make-up as a form of self-expression. In her essay, Hikaru explores the reasons why people practice beauty and deals with the question of whether makeup is liberating or oppressive. As she writes in her essay, "Although beauty myths persist and women's bodies are often sexualized in beauty advertisements, wearing makeup can help people build confidence as a way of self-expression." Her research chronicles the cultural history of make-up in the United States, in addition to explaining the efforts of contemporary artists and celebrities who have launched make-up brands in order to challenge standards and empower consumers with self-expression.

The intersection of technology and contemporary media was also a theme of interest in the seminar. Riri Yonezawa examined how Pixar Animation Studios has led the development of the animation industry, with innovative technologies such as RenderMan and USD, making it "the leading company for feature films in the world." In her essay, Riri gives not only detailed analysis of the production process at Pixar but also evidence of the many technological advances that are reflected in the Toy Story film series. Ayaka Ono also produced an outstanding piece

of research on technology and media. In her essay "Video Streaming Services: 20 Years of Rapid Growth and Its Impact on the Movie Industry," she attempts to understand why video streaming services have grown internationally in the last twenty years and how these services have impacted the movie industry. As she writes in her essay, "The arrival and growth of video streaming services has affected not only the means of watching movies such as movie theaters but also people's consumption behavior and the business model of movie production companies." Drawing on the latest research and industry trends, Ayaka examines in detail the features that have helped video streaming services achieve global market dominance, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were a number of strong contenders for the best research essay, and with so much exceptional work, it was particularly difficult to choose a best essay this year. Essays by Hikaru Ishikawa, Ayaka Ono, Ryosuke Nakamura were standouts among a very strong group of research essays. However, this year's award goes to Natsuki Imai, who wrote about the image of Asian American in contemporary mainstream media in the United States. I would like to congratulate Natsuki on her outstanding work, which reflects her intelligence, her hard work and dedication. The excellence of research speaks for itself. Her essay is printed below. The research by other members of the seminar is worthy of attention, and I am proud to publish all of this research in the BACS 2021 Graduation Thesis Collection.