

Symposium 13:30-17:30 (Faculty of Letters, Building S, Room 235)
“Religion and Gender: Re-examining Faith as a ‘Subjective’ Practice”

Panelists:

KAMIYAMA Minako (Nagoya Gakuin University)

A Study on the “Subject” and Feminist Theology in Korean Protestant Christian History

GOTO Emi (Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA),
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

In Search of Gender Equality: Muslim Women's Religious Reform Movements in 20th and
21st Century

KUDO Marie (Lecturer at Rikkyo University and other universities)

Can “Theology” Be a Practice of Resistance?: Feminist Theology and Queer Theology

Moderators:

NAKANO Tomoyo (Seijo University)

NOMURA Ikuyo (Independent Scholar)

Chair:

ISHII Kae (Doshisha University)

The legalization of same-sex marriage was enacted in France in May 2013, but before and after that, the religious right took center stage. In France, they organized demonstrations nationwide against the validation of same-sex marriage, and in Germany, they targeted sex education, which was expressly geared toward deepening the mainstream’s understanding of sexual minorities. In the United States, as the religious right spearheaded an anti-abortion movement, the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling was handed down in June 2022. The outcome overturned the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision—which had enacted protections of abortion as a constitutional right—and caused shockwaves both domestically and internationally. In Japan, the relationship between religion and politics has been attracting attention since last year; it has become clear that religion has a considerable influence on politicians’ views regarding gender and family. These politicians oppose separate surnames for married couples and same-sex marriage.

It is generally understood that religion is deeply connected to the formation of “traditional” gender order and, moreover, that it’s incompatible with modern views on gender and family. In fact, many religions and belief systems have seen women—not men—restricted from participating in rituals and organizations. If we look at the recent religious

studies that have been influenced by gender research, it's readily apparent that religion's gender-discriminatory tendencies—those elements that reinforce the existing gender order—are under scrutiny. While this newfound interest may be an important development in terms of religious studies, there is one aspect likely to remain overlooked. It is a perspective that examines why it isn't only men who convert to gender-discriminatory religions, but women, as well—and not only do they turn into fervent believers, they also sometimes become monks, saints, even priests. Did they make their own choices as “actors” (agents) or were they driven by “fanaticism” and ultimately “brainwashed”? We must consider not only the aspect of faith as a “subjective” practice, but also the contestations with structures—power relations within society, religion and family—that can constrain one's actions.

In this symposium, based on the discussion above, we will explore religious practices of believers and clergy from a gender perspective, taking into account recent scholarship in a wide range of academic fields—namely, history, area studies and theology—which transcend time and place.

In the first presentation, Kamiyama Minako will discuss the “subject” and trends in feminist theology against the historical backdrop of Korean Protestantism. Kamiyama focuses on “women” who've been excluded from both the longstanding tradition of missionary work and its historiography. She will examine trends in Korean feminist theology and themes in recent research in comparison to the Japanese case.

In the second presentation, Goto Emi will discuss modern Muslim women and their attempts to initiate religious reform movements. By focusing on the words of women seeking to eliminate gender discrimination by working to reinterpret Islamic scripture and law from the 20th to the 21st centuries, Goto will examine the definitive question—why do women continue to pursue religion?

In the third presentation, Kudo Marie will focus on theologians who operate from feminist and queer perspectives and are attempting to resist patriarchy and heterosexism within Christianity. By unraveling the various efforts developed in feminist and queer theology, Kudo's presentation will explore whether “theology” can endure as a practice of resistance.

Following these presentations, Nakano Tomoyo will comment from the perspective of welfare and Christianity in modern Germany. Nomura Ikuyo will also give us thoughts from the viewpoint of women's history, Buddhism and Japan's medieval past. We anticipate a wide-ranging and lively audience discussion.