

# The science of love popular among female students

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OSAKA--It is often said love is not logical. Yet, the "study of love," which attempts to objectively and scientifically analyze romance and teach it as an academic subject, has recently become a hot topic. The popular new field also aims to improve people's communication skills with the opposite sex.

During a "Mate Selection Theories" lecture at Waseda University, Prof. Tomonori Morikawa presents detailed strategies for dating. "When you ask someone out, say, for example, 'Which do you prefer, a French restaurant in Nishi-Azabu or Italian in Daikanyama?' If you only give two positive options, it's hard for the person to say no."

He also explains, "The sensation a couple feels when riding a roller coaster together on a date is due to an increase in tension and heart rate, which tend to be misinterpreted as the 'heart thump' caused by love."

Morikawa began giving his love lectures in 2008, and his class continues to attract many students. This academic year, about 850 students registered for the course. He screened them to select about 240 for the class, which has about 80 percent female students.

Though Morikawa is an expert in politics, he has taken up the study of love to examine the attraction process between males and females.

He analyzes people's criteria for selecting a partner, consulting leading theories from the fields of biology, psychology and economics, all because he is concerned about the low birthrate and today's trend of people staying single throughout their lives.

He teaches students the keys to success in romance. After the class ended in July, some students wrote comments on their final exams such as "I have a boyfriend now" or "I could finally end a painful relationship."

Morikawa thinks a person's employment status is one of the most influential factors in finding a mate. If one partner in a relationship does not have a stable source of income, it is difficult to seriously pursue dating or marriage. He also feels his class has

become so popular because "female students are intent on making the most of the few chances they have to meet the right person."

One municipality is taking action to counter the falling birthrate by advocating the study of love. Hyogo Deai Support Center, a facility run by a public benefit corporation on behalf of the Hyogo prefectural government, invited Morikawa to speak at an event for singles two years ago.

"The young generation doesn't have strong communication skills. So it's not enough to simply create an opportunity for them to meet and expect them to take the initiative of asking someone on a date and falling in love naturally," said Chizuko Fujimoto, a sectional chief of the center. "I hope they can improve their conversation skills by learning about the differences between genders and how to confidently present themselves."

Mao Saito, an associate professor at Ritsumeikan University's department of Social Science, has a different approach to the study of love. A few times a year, she holds an off-site meeting in which students from her seminar mostly serve as discussion leaders in a "love cafe."

Through their discussions on various topics, including "cell phones and love" and "long-distance relationships," Saito says the meeting is designed to evaluate the relationships of the participants. The meeting often takes place at high schools or as part of events held by municipalities in the Kansai region.

Saito says, "The young generation always feels peer pressure to have a boyfriend or girlfriend and be like everyone around them."

As a result, they tend to place more importance on finding someone than having a quality relationship.

During one talk at the "cafe," a female high school student realized she was forcing herself to find time to see her boyfriend every day just so he would not resent her. Saito said the student has now talked with her boyfriend and they agreed to respect each other's individual lives and allow time to see other friends.

"Young people tend to mistake their partners' controlling behavior for love. Accepting such extreme restrictions could lead to a situation of psychological or physical

abuse in a relationship," Saito warned. "Many people don't take love issues seriously because they think it's just a matter of emotions. But I hope more people will start to objectively study love."

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