



PROF. DR. KAORI HAYASHI

AOI
Lecture
2026

Who Gets to Speak?

Voice, Silence, and the Politics of Free Speech in Contemporary Japan

Freedom of speech is commonly understood as the right to express opinions without interference. Yet this understanding often overlooks a fundamental democratic question: who is actually able to speak, be heard, and participate in public life on equal terms? This lecture examines that question through the lens of contemporary Japan. Although freedom of speech is guaranteed by Article 21 of the Japanese Constitution, access to public voice has historically been unevenly distributed. Political, media, and intellectual authority have long been concentrated among a relatively narrow group of speakers, while women and other marginalized groups have often faced obstacles to participation, recognition, and credibility. Recent developments in Japanese media reveal both the possibilities and limitations of democratic inclusion. Using contemporary Japan as a point of departure, the lecture proposes a relational understanding of free speech and explores its implications for democratic societies confronting inequalities of voice in the digital age.

Prof. Dr. Kaori Hayashi is Executive Vice President and Professor at the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies, The University of Tokyo.

She is a specialist in media and journalism studies, and has been conducting international comparative research on the digitalization of media and the transformation of journalism.

In addition, she has been deeply interested in and concerned with the status of women in journalism and the representation of women in media for many years.



22. September 2026
Start 6:30
RAA-G-01 Little Aula
Rämistrasse 59
8001 Zürich
Speech in English