

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR YAMAGATA Tatsufumi



We Q Team members have observed that after the shift from in-person to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been very difficult for 2nd-year and 3rd-year students who are planning to take seminars to choose their seminar professor and for professors to connect with their students. This project focuses on both the seminar professor and student point of view to relay the elements and dynamics of seminars. Our interview articles on seminars introduce two professors at APU (one APS professor and one APM professor) and their seminars, alongside a spotlight on one of their seminar students. Through the student point-of-view focus, we hope that in addition to conveying successful seminar methods to other APU professors that they can incorporate into their own seminars, we can have them discover successful teaching methods through the student perspective as well.

I. Introduction

Professor YAMAGATA Tatsufumi is from Iwate Prefecture and attended the University of Rochester in USA, receiving a PhD in Economics. He specializes in international development and cooperation. His hobby is playing basketball.

II. Q&A about Professor Yamagata's Seminar

Although the seminar started in October 2018, it did not succeed due to a lack of seminar students. However, a year later, the seminar was restarted thanks to APU student TABA Taiki's passionate request to continue the seminar. It has been a year and a half since then. Firstly, we asked [Q]uestions about the seminar.

1. Please tell us about the characteristics of your seminar.

My specialization is international development and international cooperation, but I am focusing on what the seminar students want to learn without being particular about my own research field. **My seminar is characterized by a rich variety of research themes.**

2. Please tell us about the format of your seminar.

Currently, the seminar is mainly individual work, but I would like to work on setting up a "mixing space" for group work. It seems that some seminar students are able to have deep interactions even without group work, but for me, it is important to see who is working well and who is not working well.

3. What are three benefits of taking a seminar for students?

Three benefits are: **1) having an academic advisor, 2) easily being able to communicate directly with a professor, and 3) being able to find friends with the same interests.**

4. What have been some of the most impressive research themes from your seminar students?

In the sense that it was able to contribute to seminar students' research, the research on "Consideration for wheelchair use in Oita Prefecture, where JR Kyushu is 'unmanned' at some stations" and "Progress in applying for same-sex partnerships in Oita Prefecture" was particularly impressive. Neither happened to be in the scope of "international development", but that is alright. I believe that a student should be free to choose a theme that they will still be interested in even after graduation.

III. Q&A about Professor Yamagata's Teaching Methods

The seminar students' research themes demonstrate that everyone is free to have their own ideas (i.e., "different strokes for different folks"). How does Professor Yamagata teach in this diverse seminar?

5. What do you value in seminar instruction?

Seminar students should find out what they themselves are unavoidably interested in and build their research upon it. I also want the students to continue to be interested in what they have researched even after graduating. I hope that they will come across such a big theme through my seminar. For that reason, I would like students to focus their seminar research on what they will do in the future after

graduating, rather than writing a graduation thesis as the primary purpose.

6. Please tell us in detail about three teaching methods that you use in the seminar.

The three teaching methods in my seminar are having students: **1) find objective variables** (not only quantitative variables, but also qualitative aspects), **2) confirm the variety of objective variables** (for example, detecting good cases and practices or bad cases and practices), and **3) discovering the determinants of variables.**

7. How do you teach and help students when they are writing research papers?

When doing research, **I emphasize the importance of completely distinguishing between objective summaries** (what others have researched) and subjective evaluations (what the author has done in the paper).

8. What do you place importance on in order to carry out more specialized research in your seminar?

As I mentioned before, for those who **have a strong interest in a certain topic** and want to study how to apply it practically, **it is better to gain experience as a member of society.** Experience in society is important, such as experiencing the process of consensus building by gathering relationships and experiencing hierarchical relationships for the division of roles.



Project Q conducts the first face-to-face interview after COVID with Professor Yamagata in his office at APU.

IV. Q&A on Professor Yamagata's own research and advice for future seminar students

Lastly, Professor Yamagata answered [Q]uestions regarding his own research so far and his advice for seminar students who will study in his seminar in the future.

9. What was the first research theme that you studied?

Since I was studying in the field of economics at that time, my research topic was "the need for population control and the validity of population control policies". However, I realized that it is necessary to promote development and to develop so that humans can live, rather than controlling the population. This realization led to a shift from economic demography to development economics research.

10. What kind of research themes are you interested in for the future?

My areas of interest include employment, health, disability, poverty, and gender equality in



Professor Yamagata shows the books and movies he recommends students to use in his seminar.

developing countries. As an attitude in conducting research, I would like to place particular importance on **increasing the proportion of people who speak and give opinions.**

11. Is there anything you usually do or keep in mind for your research?

I often touch on **movies and books to expand various images.** As President Deguchi says, "traveling" is not only moving one's feet to the actual site, but can also be experienced in movies and books, and I think that notion is important as it can become motivation for learning.

12. Is there anything students should prepare for the seminar interview?

It is important for students to **ask themselves what they want to do.** In addition, for me, if there are many students who want to enter the seminar, in addition to prioritizing the students who want to take the main seminar, I place importance on how much I can assist in the student's field of research.



Project Q members and Professor Yamagata discussing research in his office.



Professor Yamagata poses with Project Q interviewers Ayaha Shibata and Kelly Lorennij.

AUTHOR'S IMPRESSION

The interview with Professor Yamagata came after the interview about him with Taba-san. Professor Yamagata's guidance to students and his approach and attitude toward learning particularly drew my attention. As Taba-san said, I think, "I want to study under this teacher." "The different folks, different strokes" seminar is a place of learning that can uniquely be offered by Professor Yamagata. I myself would like to find "what I cannot help but be interested in" and do my best to continue researching it.

INTERVIEWER and AUTHOR



Name : SHIBATA Ayaha
College : APS
Country : Japan
Message : Hello everyone! I am SHIBATA Ayaha, a Q-Team member with ALRCS since Fall 2021. My hobbies are listening to music and looking at design. Through participating in Project Q, I have been able to get to know professors' and senior students' views on learning at APU and strengthen my desire to further deepen my own learning. I would like to convey the appeal of seminars that I learned and felt in the interview to all students!

INTERVIEWER and TRANSLATOR

Name : LORENNIJ Kelly
College : APS (ED)
Country : Marshall Islands
Message : Iakwe (hello) ! I am Kelly, a 3rd year Environment and Development major. I enjoy traveling and taking my ukulele to play wherever I visit. As a member of the Project Q team under the Academic Office's ALCRS, I have been able to get an inside look on the goals and expectations of APU's faculty teachers. Through these articles detailing the methods and motivations of each respective professor, I sincerely wish each reader takes away a nugget of wisdom.



What is [Q]?

At APU there are many professors who put together wonderful classes, and if we could get to know how these classes are planned, it would contribute to the improvement of other professors' classes. For that purpose, we have begun doing interviews in order to learn about class planning. These articles have been entitled [Q], comprising a variety of meanings such as: increasing the [Q]uality of classes, answering [Q]uestions to increase quality, and forming a [Q]ueue, or line, of class improvements. We would be very happy if these articles could contribute to the [Q]uest of APU professors' class quality improvement.