By investigating women's creativity, activism, and spectatorship, and the representation of women in film and related media, my dissertation locates female agency in Japanese film production from the '30s to the 50's.

First, I provide case studies of two pioneering female filmmakers: Atsugi Taka (1907-98) and Kishi Fumiko (b. 1920). Both of them played important roles in pre- to post-war film history, but their lives and achievements have been neglected by critics and film historians. Second, I discuss the relationship between women's activism and film (in terms of both production and viewing) during the 15 Years War, analyzing the use of film in feminist discourse and action. Third, I examine the nature of female spectatorship before, during, and after the war, focusing in particular on gender differences in the reception of a variety of genres. Fourth, I contextualize these investigations by analyzing wartime representation of women in other popular media.

This study not only re-discovers women's participation in the production and viewing of film, but also situates women's visual culture in the history of feminism, focusing on the achievements of women artists and activists who worked between the First and the Second Waves. Furthermore, it takes care to analyze feminist discourse in relation to colonialism and nationalism during both the war and the following occupation era.