

Proseminar 2024

Hosted by Kyoto University

Co-hosted by Japanese Association for American Studies, ASA, OAH

Sponsored by Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission

In association with

Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Kyoritsu Women's University, Osaka University

Date: Wednesday June 5th, 2024

Time: 10:00-17:00

Venue: Former Head Office of Forest Research Station, Kyoto University

Commentators:

Iyko Day (ASA, Mount Holyoke College, Department of English)

Julie Sze (ASA, University of California at Davis, Department of American Studies)

Carl Bon Tempo (OAH, SUNY at Albany, Department of History)

Sam Lebovic (OAH, George Mason University, Department of History and Art History)

Timetable

Part I: 10:00-12:50

Chair: Koji ITO (Osaka University)

(1) Keiko TAKENO (Nanzan University) 10:00-10:40

“Disparities or Escalation of Domestic Politics?: Climate Change Politics in the U.S. and the Regional Governments’ Involvement in the International Society”

Comment: Julie Sze

(2) Masato KIKUMOTO (graduate student, Kyoto University) 10:40-11:20

“How has “Space Junk” Become an Environmental Issue? A Focus on the Debate in the 1960s-1970s”

Comment: Julie Sze, Sam Labovic

(break)

(3) Toshiaki KATO (graduate student, Kyoto University) 11:30-12:10

““Exhibit [John] Glenn Like a Trained Seal”?: US Public Diplomacy for Japan through the Mercury Project”

Comment: Sam Lebovic

(4) Keiko FUKUNISHI (Ritsumeikan University) 12:10-12:50

“Hawai‘i as an American State: Photographic Representations of Hawaiians at the Turn of the Twentieth Century”

Comment: Iyko Day

Part II: 14:00-16:50

Chair: Yuka MORIGUCHI (Kyoto University)

(5) Mifuyu ARIMA (graduate student, Rikkyo University) 14:00-14:40

“Powerless Words and Fragile Fictions in Melville’s *Pierre*”

Comment: Iyko Day

(6) Maira MIYAMOTO (graduate student, Tsuda University) 14:40-15:20

“American Cross-dressing Actresses and Their Fans in the 19th and 20th Centuries”

Comment: Iyko Day

(break)

(7) Eri KITADA (Ochanomizu University) 15:30-16:10

“Japanese-Filipino Families in the U.S. Colonial Philippines”

Comment: Carl Bon Tempo

(8) Midori KOMATSU HIDAKA (graduate student, Doshisha University) 16:10-16:50

“Shades of Whiteness, Perception of Otherness: Locating the Ethnic Japanese in the Dominican Pigmentocracy”

Comment: Carl Bon Tempo

2024 Proseminar Report

Mifuyu Arima (Ph.D. Student, Rikkyo University)

The JAAS Proseminar in Kyoto was a great opportunity to present my work and receive valuable feedback. I presented my paper, “Powerless Words and Fragile Fictions in Melville’s *Pierre*,” which argues that Herman Melville’s *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (1852) reflects his faith in and skepticism of fiction by illustrating the contrast between the eponymous character’s powerless words and the narrative influence of female characters on him. This contrast reflects the prosperity of sentimental novels in the literary marketplace of mid-nineteenth-century America. Considering Melville’s response to sentimental novels and the contemporary literary marketplace, I examined his consciousness as an author as reflected in *Pierre*.

I really appreciated the helpful and informative comments and questions I received. Although I focused on the analogy between the powerful female characters and sentimental novelists in the mid-nineteenth-century America, Professor Iyko Day’s comment on the importance of the theme of incest made me reconsider the relationship between the characters. Another comment on the fact that *Pierre* has not only sentimental but also gothic elements broadened the scope of my discussion. Professor Julie Sze, Professor Carl Bon Tempo, and Professor Sam Lebovic advised me to include more explanations about the literary marketplace at the time. In addition, I am deeply grateful for useful opinions from other audience members. Based on these insights, I will improve my discussion and complete an essay in the future.

Through participation in the JAAS Proseminar, I discovered the importance of international exchange as well as learned about the different ways in which other presenters approached their research. As I had focused on literary studies, this experience made me reconsider how I should connect close reading with historical contexts. Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to the Japanese Association of American Studies, the American Studies Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the Japan-US Friendship Commission for their support in organizing Proseminar.

2024 Proseminar Report

Keiko Fukunishi (Ritsumeikan University)

On June 5th, 2024, I had an opportunity to present my research on Hawaiian landscape photographs, titled “Visualizing Hawai‘i as an American State: Photographic Representation of the Hawaiian Landscape at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” as a part of an event called the Proseminar, funded by the Japanese Association for American Studies. Through analyzing photographs of Hawaiian natural landscapes that circulated to the American public at the turn of the twentieth century, I argued that these popularly circulated photographs of Hawai‘i represented the islands using familiar visual motifs found in oil paintings of the American West. Photographic images of the Hawaiian landscape resemble many of the prominent American West oil paintings, and these works appear to share the motif of a controlled garden where both machine and nature coexist harmoniously, as Leo Marx argued of American West paintings in his analyses of the perception of the American West within the U.S. in the 18th and 19th centuries. I demonstrated that, through representing photographic images of Hawai‘i using familiar motifs of oil painting images featuring the American West, these photographic works function to contextualize Hawai‘i as the “new American West,” de-territorializing Hawai‘i from its geopolitics and locating it within the narrative of American expansionism, as part of familiar mythologized and ideologically constructed spaces.

I received useful comments through presenting at this event, but one of the most insightful suggestions was to consider how landscape photographs of Hawai‘i might be racialized. Professor Iyko Day in particular directed my attention to the more traditional perception of the “sublime,” such as the ones suggested by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, and asked me if the photographs of the Hawaiian landscape I discussed in the presentation had such a “supernatural” or “godly” connotation to them. This comment reminded me of Professor Day’s journal article, “Tseng Kwong Chi and the Eugenic Landscape.” In this article, through analyzing the “Expedition Series,” produced by Chinese American queer artist Tseng Kwong Chi, Professor Day argues that Chi’s framing of himself within the otherwise romanticized colonial landscape photographs of America and Canada unsettles normative racial, gendered, and sexual conventions that are naturalized in the landscape. Although my photographic sources of the Hawaiian landscape are not entirely the same as Professor Iyko’s sources, my photographs did frame many immigrant laborers, and Professor Iyko’s comments helped me to think more critically about this framing, and how their presence directs our attention to racializing aspects of American West oil painting images. Although I am still in the process of revising my research based on all of the comments I received at the Proseminar, these comments were immensely helpful for me to deepen my analyses of visual images. I would like to express my gratitude to the Japanese Association of American Studies, American Studies Association, Organization of American Historians, and Japan-US Friendship Commission for all their support in organizing Proseminar.

2024 Proseminar Report

Toshiaki Kato (Ph.D. student, Kyoto University)

The JAAS Proseminar in Kyoto was a great opportunity for me to share my research and receive thoughtful feedback. I appreciate the ASA and OAH professors for giving me great comments and questions. I presented “‘Exhibit [John] Glenn Like a Trained Seal’?: US Public Diplomacy for Japan through the Mercury Project,” which explored how American astronaut John Glenn’s visit to Japan became public diplomacy under negative policy for sending astronauts for public relations.

The comments were very helpful for me to step into writing a research paper. Prof. Lebovic’s question “What is success?” was so helpful in refining my research. I will define the success for the US government and the Japanese side. The comments on the Japanese side also made me realize the need for further research on the Japanese intentions and reactions. Prof. Sze comments helped me to create a theoretical frame and think about the meaning of Glenn’s “family.” And Prof. Tempo comments made me understand the importance of comparison with other literature on public diplomacy such as jazz musicians who no one thought were trained seal. Again, I appreciate the professors who giving me insightful comments and questions, and the chair Prof. Moriguchi and Prof. Ito.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for the support of the Japanese Association of American Studies, American Studies Association, Organization of American Historians, and Japan-US Friendship Commission.

2024 Proseminar Report

Eri Kitada (Ochanomizu University)

I attended the Proseminar 2024 in Kyoto to present my paper “Japanese-Filipino Families in the U.S. Colonial Philippines.” This presentation examined a socio-legal history of marriages in the U.S. colonial Philippines (1902-1946) by looking at the marital and familial relationship between Filipino women and Japanese men. I investigated several cases of interracial families of Filipino wives/mothers and Japanese husbands/fathers who became the concerns of the U.S. colonial state in the 1930s. I elucidate the intricate legal nexus of the United States, Japan, and the colonial Philippines which put the Japanese-Filipino families outside the legal category of family. I argued that the U.S. colonial governance of legal marriages predicated itself on racial differences among Filipino women, such as Christian Filipino and tribal women, by denying marginalized groups access to legal marriages and broader citizenship.

I received quite helpful and thought-provoking questions and suggestions from Professors Carl Bon Tempo, Iyko Day, Julie Sze, and Sam Lebovic. I did not expect that these scholars would read my and others’ papers in such constructive ways. After the workshop, I also enjoyed the conversation on my presentation and its directions with other participants. I am excited to incorporate the ideas that I got at the Proseminar into my book, currently entitled *Intimate Convergence: Fragmented Agents across Diasporas, Imperialisms, and Indigeneity*.

The other 7 presenters shared their research projects, including international relations, history of science, literature, performance studies, and visual studies, and I learned a lot from each presentation and their Q&As. I am so fortunate to get to know these early career scholars who are doing interesting and groundbreaking research in American Studies and beyond. During the break and lunchtime, I also enjoyed talking with other participants, such as undergraduate and graduate students and professors. The Proseminar served as a great site for getting connected with U.S.-based scholars and other Japan-based scholars whom I would not talk to without the workshop. The historic seminar room, “Former Head Office of Forest Research Station,” at Kyoto University was beautiful, bringing good vibes to be inspired by others’ research.

I am very grateful to be part of the workshop and to get helpful feedback from the participants. I would like to thank the JAAS International Committee, the OAH and ASA delegates, and the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission for making the Proseminar possible.

2024 Proseminar Report

Midori Komatsu Hidaka (PhD Candidate, Doshisha University)

The JAAS Proseminar was a great opportunity to get feedback from international professors which in turn allows my research to be exposed to a broader audience with more diverse perspectives. For this workshop, I presented my paper titled, “Shades of Whiteness, Perception of Otherness: Locating the Ethnic Japanese in the Dominican Pigmentocracy.” This paper encompasses a portion of my longer project which is my dissertation, and I was looking to receive feedback to enlarge this work as well as the potential directions that could be taken.

I received quite useful and constructive suggestions from the commenting professors such as the re-evaluation or re-addressing the concept of pigmentocracy as a changing and evolving historical phenomenon. Another great suggestion was the expansion of this research to speak on the Dominican diaspora in the US and the potential of racial ideologies being exported from the DR to the US. I was also suggested a variety of great books that could be fruitful for my research project as well.

Overall, this was a great experience to listen, learn, and interact with other academics and to gain confidence in my work as a young scholar. I was very grateful to be able to participate and to receive such great feedback as well as motivation to continue pursuing my research.

2024 Proseminar Report

Maira Miyamoto (graduate student, Tsuda University)

It was a great opportunity for me to make a presentation in The JAAS Proseminar. It was my first experience to attend a face-to-face academic conference. I was amazed and impressed by my fellow participants' interesting research and their high level of English. This experience will be precious and crucial for my future career as a researcher. I am also grateful for ASA and OHA professors whose comments were supportive and constructive to make my research stronger and for all the staff involved in organizing the event as well.

My presentation, titled "American Cross-Dressing Actresses and Their Fans in the 19th Century," will be part of my master's thesis. This research focuses on Charlotte Cushman, a nineteenth-century Shakespearean actress, and her fans. I conducted archival research at the Library of Congress in Washington DC and found private correspondence between Cushman and her followers. I plan to analyze the relationship between male Shakespearean actors and their fans, both male and female, in the archives. When Professor Iyko Day advised me to research on fan letters, both male and female, I found that my mindset was influenced by gender binarism. Moreover, Professor Carl Bon Tempo suggested that I make comparisons by categorizing fans by class as well as fans are not monolithic. Based on this feedback, I reconsidered the diversity inherent in fans, and accordingly will compare and analyze them. The professors also recommended me to create a digital archive of Charlotte Cushman. I intend to continue my research on Cushman with a view to accomplish this goal of creating a digital archive of her work.

I felt very honored to have participated in this Proseminar. It was a valuable experience not only to present my own research in English, but also to have an opportunity to know about research projects by graduate students and young researchers from other universities. The feedback from the professors was immensely helpful for me to sophisticate my research.

2024 Proseminar Report

Takako TAKENO (Nanzan University)

I am grateful for the valuable opportunity to present at the Proseminar 2024 in Kyoto and receive feedback. I presented my paper, “Disparities or Escalation of Domestic Politics?: Climate Change Politics in the U.S. and the Regional Governments’ Involvement in the International Society,” which analyzes the non-central governments’ diplomatic activities regarding the climate change. Focusing on the “paradiplomacy” and the C40 (a global network of mayors), I examined the climate change politics in terms of the international society and the United States’ domestic politics.

I am deeply thankful for the valuable chance to receive comments and feedback from Professor Julie Sze, who was the commentator of my presentation, and Professor Carl Bon Tempo and Professor Sam Lebovic. Based on the comments I received, I will improve my research to focus more on the framing of the research and to consider the unit of analysis, such as city, state, and subnational government. I will also consider the historical background of paradiplomacy, which describes the diplomatic activities of subnational governments, and I take into account related activities, such as sister-city relationships. I appreciate moderator, Professor Koji Ito and Professor Yuka Moriguchi, and the opportunity to speak with Professor Iyko Day after the presentation. Listening to other presenters’ presentations also allowed me to learn a lot.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Japan-US Friendship Commission, the Japanese Association for American Studies, American Studies Association, and Organization of American Historians for all their support in organizing the Proseminar. And I greatly appreciate the effort of Professor Yuki Maruyama, Professor Masaya Sato, and all the members who involved in organizing the event as well.