

Fall'24 UHM Center for Japanese Studies Seminar Series

Co-sponsored with the Department of East Asian Languages & Literatures

Discussant: Andre Haag, Ph.D. (Associate Professor of Japanese Literature, EALL)

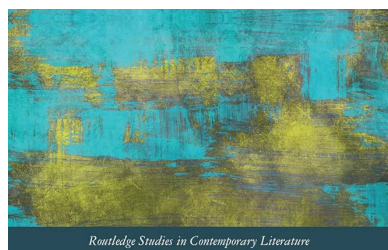
WHAT HARUKI MURAKAMI TALKS ABOUT WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT FREEDOM



Speaker: Chikako Nihei, Ph.D.

Author of Haruki Murakami: Storytelling and Productive Distance (2019)

October 14 (Mon.) | 1:30–3:00pm | Tokioka Room (Moore 319)



HARUKI MURAKAMI

STORYTELLING AND PRODUCTIVE DISTANCE

Chikako Nihei



The reasons for Haruki Murakami's world popularity have been a popular topic for academic discussions as well as social media posts by his general readers. His readable Japanese, his unique storytelling style, and the lack of "cultural odor" in his stories are surely the keys that have attracted readers both domestically and internationally. On the other hand, many of Murakami's translators explain that his works became popular when the society experienced big social and/or political change and people's fear and anxiety increased. I argue that Murakami's stories encourage readers to be themselves without losing a control of their mind and life, when social roles and social orders are destabilized.

In this talk, I explain how he understands living one's own life as well as the idea of freedom in the world that is globally becoming a consumerist and information society. The talk will also touch on Murakami's thorough research about Aum Shinrikyo, the cult group that perpetrated the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack in 1995, a crucial even that made Murakami think deeply about what freedom really is.