



A Center for Japanese Studies hybrid seminar co-sponsored by University of Hawai'i Press

Ryokan: Mobilizing Hospitality in Rural Japan

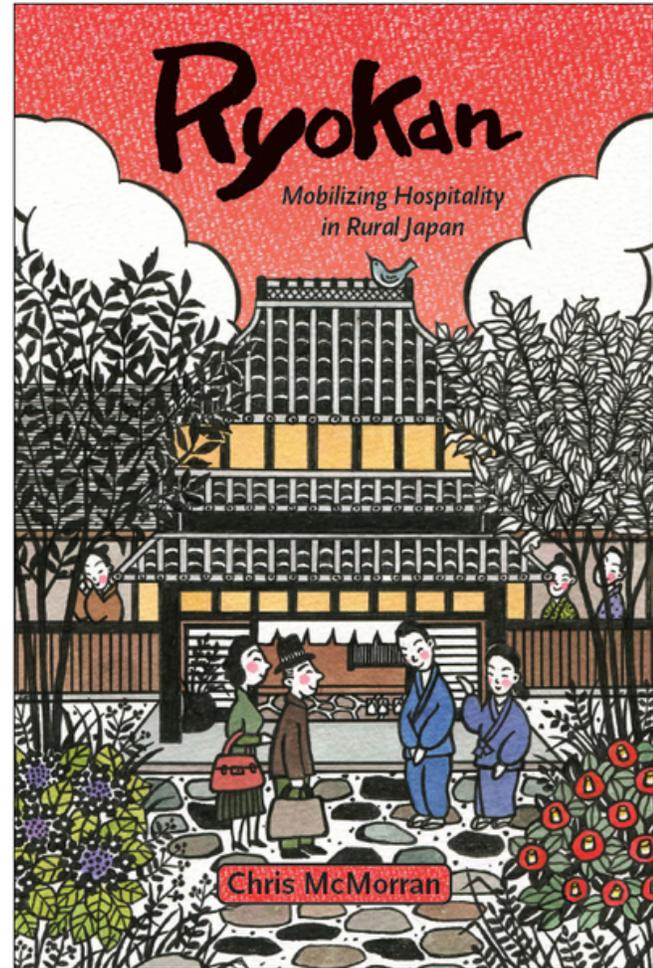
Tuesday, April 16, 2024

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm HST
Moore Hall 258 or Zoom



Dr. Chris McMorran

Associate Professor of Japanese Studies
National University of Singapore



Kurokawa Onsen is a rare bright spot in Japan's countryside. Its two dozen traditional inns (ryokan) annually host hundreds of thousands of guests who admire its landscape, experience its hospitality, and soak in its hot springs. As a result, these ryokan have enticed village youth to return home to take over successful family businesses and revive the community. What does it take to produce this family business and one of Japan's most relaxing spaces, and who does the day-to-day labor of hospitality? In this talk, I share findings from a year spent welcoming guests, carrying luggage, scrubbing baths, cleaning rooms, washing dishes, and talking with co-workers and owners about their jobs, relationships, concerns, and aspirations. I share how Kurokawa's ryokan mobilize hospitality to create a rural escape, emphasizing the gendered work of hospitality, as well as the generational work of ryokan owners vs. the daily embodied work of their employees.