



*Center for Japanese Studies Seminar Series*  
*Crown Prince Akihito Scholarship Lecture*



**Now Long Ago:**  
**Anachronism in Contemporary and Edo Japanese Literature**



**Christopher Smith**

Doctoral Candidate in East Asian Languages and Literature  
 UH Mānoa  
 Crown Prince Akihito Scholarship recipient 2012-2014

What is going on in a work of fiction when a samurai uses a cell phone? Anachronisms (things out of their time) such as this are certainly funny, and other anachronisms might be dismissed as mistakes on the part of the author. But are anachronisms really nothing more than errors or cheap comedic gags? This presentation explores the work that anachronisms perform in Japanese literature. I examine anachronism as a literary phenomenon that playfully summons up discourses about the past and reconfigures them in new ways by superimposing them on the present. History, of course, is an important site of social and cultural meaning. It is used as a source of identity, as well as to legitimate power. Anachronism, then, is a way that literature can playfully and self-consciously destabilize sociopolitical narratives and structures based on that history. I will examine the projects being undertaken with anachronism in several texts from the contemporary period (late Shōwa to the present) and the Edo period (1600-1868), including popular forms such as manga, anime, and kabuki plays.



**Friday, October 7th, 2016**  
**3:00 - 4:15 pm**  
**Tokioka Room (Moore Hall 319)**  
 Light refreshments will be served after the lecture