



UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I* MĀNOA
EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES



University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Center for Japanese Studies
日本研究センター

EALL TALK SERIES

Masculinity and Mediality in 18th-Century Edo

Thomas Gaubatz
Northwestern University

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 11:00 -12:00 PM

Moore Hall, Room 258



Tokugawa Japan saw the emergence of new forms of urban masculinity, as social relations and gender norms were transformed by the money economy. New masculinities were articulated in the context of the urban sex trade—in relationships with elite courtesans—and disseminated through woodblock-printed books. Mediated by print, masculinity was reimagined as a kind of literacy: a posture of “reading” the conduct of the courtesan, and a knowing skepticism toward textual representations of the demimonde. This lecture traces these dynamics in a study of the *tsū* (sophisticate), an enigmatic icon of urban fashion that was at the center of 18th-century Edo literature. Careful reading of “books of wit” (*sharebon*) reveals that the *tsū* was less a social figure than a literary one: a floating signifier used to stage irresolvable debates over cultural capital, and a phantasm of authenticity both enabled and precluded by the commercialization of print.

Thomas Gaubatz is an interdisciplinary scholar of early modern Japanese literature, woodblock print culture, and urban history. His research explores the nature of the early modern city as a social and media space, representations of the city in literature, Tokugawa popular fiction as a form of urban culture, and the roles played by woodblock print culture in giving shape to new ideas of community and identity. His first book, *The Textual Townsman: Writing Urban Identity in Early Modern Japan* (Columbia University Press, 2025), is a study of the formation of a merchant class, and a literature of urban identity, between the late 17th and early 18th century. He received his PhD in Japanese literature from Columbia University in 2016.

Talk is open to the public. Light refreshments will be served in EALL (Moore Hall 3rd F) following the talk.

For more information, please contact SeaHee Choi (seahee@hawaii.edu) and Matthew Burdelski (mburdels@hawaii.edu); For disability access, please contact the EALL office at 956-8940 or eall@hawaii.edu