Stephen Covell, Western Michigan University: “Buddhist Higher Education in Modern Japan”

The modern period brought about great changes in Buddhist education. Today there are 65 institutions of higher education registered as members in the Council of Buddhist Universities. These institutions include two-year colleges, four-year colleges, seminaries with small enrollments, and comprehensive universities with over 30,000 students. Understanding the changes to Buddhist higher education in the modern period - understanding what is taught, who is taught, and why curricula are designed as they are – is essential to our understanding of Buddhism in Japan today. This paper will introduce the history of Buddhist higher education in the modern period and look at specific examples of how Buddhist institutions understand and put into practice (or not) their Buddhist identity.

Sarah Thal, University of Wisconsin-Madison: “The Way of the Samurai and the Backlash against Women's Rights in 1890s Japan”

The transformation of bushidō (the Way of the Samurai) from a status-bound description of bushi behavior to an ethical, national Way of all Japanese was indelibly shaped by Japanese awareness of the Victorian cult of the “gentleman” and the domestic Japanese politics of the early 1890s. Amidst debates over the drafting of the new Meiji Civil Code and its provisions concerning women’s rights, an influential core of elite men, closely affiliated with the Meiji government, began to assert that what was distinctly Japanese about bushidō (as opposed to Western chivalry) was that “we do not worship women.” In other words, male supremacy, or patriarchy, became a marker of the uniqueness of Japan’s national character and identity. The early development of conservative bushidō rhetoric thus created a conviction among many that patriarchal structures and values were an essential part of Japaneseness itself -- that true Japaneseness meant the subservience of women.
Namiko Kunimoto, The Ohio State University: “Olympic Dissent: Art, Politics, and the Tokyo Games”

This essay will focus on artistic production surrounding the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964 and 2020. How did photographers and artists from the postwar period, such as Nakamura Hiroshi (b. 1932), and contemporary artists, such as Takayama Akira (b. 1969), respond to state-sponsored imagery and create art that raises questions about the demand for human labor and urban change brought about by Olympic-driven development? Did these avant-garde artists always dissent from national agendas, or did they at times comply? My work compares art production from these time periods to examine aesthetic politics, including the limits of parody, the shifting depiction of the body, and the sometimes-unexpected motivations behind anti-Olympic artwork. Through an examination of Olympic-related art and the gendered, labored bodies that must produce the Olympic spectacle, my essay will reveal the specific political and artistic stakes of the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964 and 2020.

HOTEL: A block of 5 rooms has been set aside for Friday, April 6, and 15 rooms for Saturday, April 7, at the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott – Farmington Hills. Located at 27777 Stansbury St., Farmington Hills, MI 48334, the hotel is right off I-696 and is about 30 minutes from campus and no more than 10 minutes from dinner. The rate is $95 plus tax per night and includes free parking and a hot buffet breakfast. To make a reservation, call the hotel directly at 248-442-9800, and be sure to mention the Midwest Japan Seminar. Please note that the block rate is only guaranteed until March 16.

CAMPUS MAP AND PARKING: A campus map can be found at: www.maps.wayne.edu. Free parking may be available along Anthony Wayne Drive where there are no meters or no-parking signs. Lots requiring a credit card will otherwise charge $7.50.

DINNER: After the seminar, we will reconvene at Yotsuba at 7 p.m. for dinner (7365 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, MI 48322). This restaurant is a favorite for Japanese food around town and is a short drive from the hotel. For a sneak peek at the menu, go to: http://yotsuba-restaurant.com/.

CARPOOLSING: For those flying in and opting not to rent a car, Uber, Lyft, or a taxi will be your best bet to get to the Wayne State campus. Thereafter, we should have enough cars to convey everyone to dinner and then the hotel. Depending on need, Betsy Lublin can also provide one shuttle run on Sunday morning from the hotel to the airport.

LOCAL CONTACT: Betsy Lublin (elublin@wayne.edu)

To receive PDF copies of the papers, please e-mail Betsy Lublin (elublin@wayne.edu) by March 17. Also, please indicate if you intend to join for dinner on Saturday evening.

SCHEDULE FOR 2018-2019 – FORTHCOMING!!

MJS Website: http://www.wmich.edu/japancenter/seminar
THE MIDWEST JAPAN SEMINAR for 2017-2018
IS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM:

Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission
Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies

Along with funding from:
The Ohio State University - Title VI Grant and the
Department of History of Art
University of Notre Dame
host schools
and the home institutions of presenters