Race, Citizenship, and Inclusion/Exclusion

All talks will be presented free via Zoom at 6 p.m. Pacific Time

Registration Information will be announced via CJS email list
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October 6 – Scott Kurashige, Texas Christian University
Model Minority Ideology and Antiblackness in Japanese American History
The involvement of an Asian American officer in the police murder of George Floyd has drawn heightened attention to the “model minority” image of Asians in the United States. Much of the focus, particularly from a younger generation of Asian Americans aligning with the Black Lives Matter movement, has been placed on the political consequences of Asian Americans rejecting or accepting the status of “honorary whites” within a racist system. In this presentation, Dr. Kurashige will argue these vital and far-reaching debates about the function of racist ideology should be complemented by greater attention to the historical origins of “model minority” discourse in the 20th century.

October 20 – Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Australian National University
Citizenship In Japan: from “Closed Country” to “Unity In Diversity”
Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, controversy erupted in Japan about the Japanese government’s policies on the entry of foreigners. Like many countries around the world, Japan imposed tight restrictions on cross-border movement during the pandemic, but Japan’s rules were particularly strict. Even foreigners who had spouses or immediate family in Japan, and many of those with permanent residence, were prevented from entering Japan from abroad. This approach seems at odds with recent measures by the Japanese government to loosen the country’s immigration restrictions and welcome the entry of foreign workers. The apparent policy contradictions reflect deep seated paradoxes and dilemmas in Japanese policies towards migration, citizenship and belonging. This lecture will explore how these debates have played out from the late nineteenth century to the present day, and consider how the long history of changing boundaries of belonging in Japan affects Japanese citizenship in the 2020s.

November 5 – Glenda Roberts, Waseda University
Demographic Decline, Population Aging, and Immigration in Japan: Changes in Store for the Ethno-nation?
Japan is among the most rapidly aging societies in the world, with a low total fertility rate hovering around 1.4 and a declining population. Yet unlike many other countries facing similar circumstances, Japan has not heretofore turned to migrants as a partial solution to the labor shortages and tax shortfalls that accompany such circumstances. Currently, foreign residents make up only 2% of all residents in Japan. The 2018 revisions in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act and the Act for Establishment of the Ministry of Justice, however, show the beginning of a softening in attitude toward the importance of migrant labor in what scholars point to as an ethno-nationalist country. What changes are taking place, and will these new labour importation schemes prove sufficient to alleviate the strains of the super aging society? Will new populations find social inclusion in Japan, and how is this being imagined?

November 17 – David Janes and Mary Collins, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University
The OIST Experiment: Building a World Class Science and Technology University in Okinawa
Considered by some to be on the periphery of Japan, how might Okinawa be reimagined as a new center for innovation and research on the world’s most cutting-edge topics? How might a global scientific institution that operates in English with faculty and students from over 50 countries foster more inclusion and global connections in Okinawa and throughout Japan? These questions and more will be discussed as we examine the creation, mission, and vision of the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (OIST). OIST was creatively constructed with the assistance of Nobel laureates from around the world and opened its doors in 2012. In a few short years has gained global notoriety, including having been listed as the top institution in Japan for scientific research quality and number 9 globally. The University has also incubated new companies and is fostering an innovation ecosystem in Okinawa.