

# Institute for Japanese Studies Lecture Series

## Imagining Prostitution in Modern Japan, 1850–1913

**50**  
1969–2019  
EAST ASIAN  
STUDIES  
CENTER

Monday, Oct. 28, 4:00-5:30 pm

Reception 5:30PM-6:00PM

Mendenhall 125 (125 S Oval Mall)

Ann Marie Davis

Japanese Studies Librarian  
Ohio State Libraries



This presentation will examine the ways in which modern Japan imagined the symbol of the prostitute as a project of nation- and empire-building. In response to Western incursion, wide-ranging debates in Japan linked the prostitute to national security and international prestige in imperative new ways. I argue that the figure of the prostitute was a powerful symbolic resource deployed, variously, by wide-ranging interest groups, as they negotiated their own shifting distinctions of power and status. By the end of the Meiji period (1868-1912), the figure of the prostitute was the product of more than a half-century of high-stakes conversations about the future of Japan and the role of women in the modern nation-state. Such debates about the prostitute were in turn central to and mutually constitutive of the emergent social order in modern Japan.

Ann Marie Davis is assistant professor and librarian of Japanese Studies at The Ohio State University. A former history professor, she has taught courses on the history of Japan, global sex trafficking, and empire and expansion in East Asia. Her research spans the disciplines of Japanese Studies, Teaching and Learning, and Information and Library Science. In addition to her recent book, she has published articles in the *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, *College and Undergraduate Libraries*, and *Information Technology and Libraries*.



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This event is supported by a U.S. Department of Education title VI grant to The Ohio State University East Asian Studies Center.