

Japan on American TV:

*An Alternate History of US Fascinations and
Fears of Japan*

Alisa Freedman

Dec 16th, 5:30 PM ~7:00 PM (JST)

Hybrid format

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This talk explores political, economic, and cultural issues underlying depictions of Japan on US television comedies and the programs they have inspired. Since the start of regular broadcasting in the

1950s, US television programs have taken the role of “curators” of Japan, displaying and explaining selected aspects for viewers. Beliefs in US hegemony over Japan underpin this curation process. Drawing from my book *Japan on American TV*, I will take a historical perspective to understand the diversity of TV parodies about Japan and show how these programs reflect changing patterns of cultural globalization and



perpetuate national stereotypes while verifying Japan’s international influence. I will suggest strategies for using TV comedies as research and teaching tools to gently approach racism, cultural essentialism, cultural appropriation, and other issues otherwise difficult to discuss. Television presents an alternative history of American fascinations with and fears of Japan.

Bio: Alisa Freedman is a professor of Japanese literature, cultural studies, and gender at the University of Oregon. Her books include *Japan on American TV: Screaming Samurai Join Anime Clubs in the Land of the Lost*, *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road*, an annotated translation of Kawabata Yasunari’s *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, a coedited volume on *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan*, and an edited textbook on *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture* (first and second editions). She was the editor-in-chief of the *US-Japan Women’s Journal* (2016-2022).

This talk is organized by David H. Slater (Professor of Anthropology, Sophia University)