PANEL TITLE: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
Discussant: Carla Freeman, Winship Distinguished Research Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Emory University

PANEL PARTICIPANTS:
Julia Bullock, Associate Professor, Japanese Studies, Emory University

Paper title:
“Coeducation in the Age of ‘Good Wife, Wise Mother’: Koizumi Ikuko’s Quest for ‘Equality of Opportunity’”

Abstract:
Koizumi Ikuko (1892-1964), a prewar educator and outspoken advocate of women’s rights, was a proponent of coeducation in the 1930s, when such arguments marked one as radical and potentially subversive even in progressive and intellectual circles. Unlike many other prewar feminists, who often couched their arguments for women’s rights within the imperial rhetoric of nurturing “good wives and wise mothers,” Koizumi argued that women should be granted equality of educational opportunity so as to enable them to be financially independent. As Japan slid further into war with China and the “common sense” of average citizens was subsumed by imperialist propaganda, it became increasingly difficult to sustain such arguments, and in 1935 Koizumi left Japan to teach at a school for women in Beijing. Ten years later, her support for coeducation was vindicated when Occupation authorities discovered a copy of her 1931 book Danjo Kyogakuron (Coeducation) and asked her to serve as advisor to the Allied staff responsible for reorganizing the Japanese educational system.

This paper will explore the rhetorical aspects of Koizumi’s arguments for coeducation, with particular attention to the way her claims were inflected by the dominant pro-imperial and pro-natalist political atmosphere. I argue that her writings tell us much about the relationship between feminism and the Japanese state in the 1930s, as well as the extent to which Japanese feminists were able to influence Occupation authorities to pass many of the social reforms that they were unable to enact themselves during the prewar period.
**Ronald Loftus**, Professor, Japanese Language and East Asian History, Willamette University

**Paper title:**

**Abstract:**
What happens when women write their autobiographies or memoirs? To be sure, they gain a voice and exert some control over who tells their story; but the language and the structure of these genres are heavily embedded in the patriarchy so they cannot help feeling like trespassers at times. But my work on Japanese women’s memoirs and autobiographies, beginning with *Telling Lives: Women’s Self Writing in Modern Japan* (University of Hawaii Press, 2004), and continuing with *Changing Lives: The ‘Postwar’ in Japanese Women’s Autobiographies and Memoirs* (forthcoming, 2012), suggests that writing memoirs can actually bring about a transformation in the way women situate themselves and experience the world. My paper will demonstrate, through a reading of a pair of postwar women’s memoirs, how Japanese women were able to experience a substantial transformation during the process of recollecting and writing their memoirs.

My paper will focus on Yoshitake Teruko’s *Onna no undōshi: watashi no ikita sengo* (Minerva shobo, 2006) and Kishino Junko’s *Onna no chihei kara miete-kita mono* (Tabata shoten, 1980), two women who specifically grappled with the issue of what it means to discover a “feminine consciousness” (*onna-ishiki*) in the context of the 1970s “lib movement.” Both women were around 40 years old when they encountered the lib movement so they had already established themselves in professional careers: Yoshitake worked for Tōei Studios, and Kishino for the *Sankei shinbun*. Both had encountered obstacles in the workplace and were questioning how the patriarchal system was requiring them to perform femininity (*onna-rashisa*, and *yasashisa* respectively). Moreover, both women had participated in the Ampo protest movement in 1960 so they address how that event shaped their later encounter with the lib movement. In addition, they both describe how their encounter with *ribu* came at a critical moment in their lives and how this encounter reoriented their understanding of the world and their place in it.

If time permits, I might also be able to round out my remarks with reference to a third memoir by Kanamori Toshie who was not only interested in how gender is not well-represented in the textbooks and in the current educational system, but also how deeply and unevenly the demographic time-bomb that Japan faces affects women.

**Nancy Stalker**, Associate Professor, Depts. of Asian Studies and History, University of Texas at Austin
"Flower Empowerment: Rethinking Japan's Traditional Arts as Women's Labor"

Abstract:
Feminist scholars of Japan do not often address the realm of traditional arts, perhaps because practices like ikebana and tea demand conformance to gendered stereotypes of the female body as demure and servile. While polite arts like ikebana indeed provided middle-class bridal credentials, they also gave women significant, unparalleled professional opportunities in a world where Japan's international identity was increasingly defined as cultural and feminine.

Women represented only one percent of pre-modern ikebana but Meiji-era educational reforms mandated the subject in girls' school curriculum, leading to a complete gender ratio reversal by the early twentieth century. Although positions of authority remained largely male, in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war widows sought new forms of respectable employment and female ikebana teachers began to appear in greater numbers, a situation that multiplied following defeat in World War II.

In the 1960s era of high-speed growth, during the peak of its popularity, ikebana was a major commercial industry with three thousand schools and an estimated ten million students. Women gained greater influence as teachers, some becoming headmasters of their own schools and earning salaries comparable to white-collar management. Within some of the largest schools women organized teacher's associations and innovative retirement pay systems. Daughters of famous headmasters inherited control of multi-million dollar enterprises and became media celebrities; some used their notoriety to address women's issues. Abroad, Japanese immigrants and the wives of corporate sojourners found that teaching ikebana could provide both a living and entrée into new social circles.

In sum, this paper argues that rethinking ikebana helps us re-examine Japan's modern economic development, especially postwar recovery and growth, in new ways that give greater consideration to women's labor and social contributions.

Chris McMorran, Lecturer, Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore

"Performing resistance when there is ‘no place to go’: Women’s labor in the Japanese tourist industry"

Abstract:
This paper explores the ryokan (Japanese inn) as a site of feminist resistance. This goal may seem counterintuitive, since the ryokan features a strict gendered division of labor and perpetuates a conservative form of the ie. However, I argue that through their work, nakai, servers/waitresses who comprise the bulk of ryokan staff, resist the ideologies that
their roles reproduce – specifically that of the hostessing woman at home and the supporting cast member in an extended corporate family at work. In this way, nakai embody a vital, yet seldom recognized, idea underlying the concept of performativity: that normative actions can become reconfigured not only through the rejection of prescribed scripts, but through their faithful repetition. This power of performativity is especially relevant in employment in cultural industries like tourism, where workers participate in displays of cultural identity.

Based on one year of fieldwork in a dozen ryokan, this paper suggest the ryokan as a space of resistance by women to traditional views of a woman’s “place” in Japanese society. Although the impacts of this reconceptualization may be limited to the employees themselves, they are significant for a population of women typically forgotten in Japan: the tens of thousands of divorced, separated, and single female employees in the country’s inns and hotels whose limited education, lack of recognized job skills, and lack of attachment to the normative home make them say they have “no place to go.” In summary, I analyze performativity in service employment as feminist praxis in contemporary Japan.