"Contending with the Modern West: Japanese and Yiddish Satires in the Era of High Imperialism”

Dr. David Gordon
Professor of Asian History
Shepherd University
UHM alumni (PhD in History, 1997)

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Moore Hall 258

Hybrid presentation, in-person (masks required) and via Zoom Webinar* (registration required)

*Register in advance for the webinar: http://go.hawaii.edu/23K
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In the later nineteenth century, many Japanese and East European Jews, respectively, perceived their polities to be under threat from Western governments, even as some also found hope in humanitarian idealism. To understand this mixed atmosphere, we will examine two satirical works: Japanese democratic activist Nakae Chomin’s A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government (1887) and classic Yiddish novelist Sholem Abramovitch’s The Mare (1873). Each story features an idealist figure—in some measure, the author’s younger self—who is assailed by a realist and a cynic, respectively, for his naivete. Reflecting contrastive trajectories, the Japanese novel inclines to comedy, while the Yiddish one inclines to tragedy.

Seminar co-sponsored with UHM Department of History

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