



November 2023

16

4:30PM ET

Old Horticulture Building,
Room 255

Dreams and Nightmares of the Super-Express in 1960s Japan

Touted as a symbol of the "new Japan" when it opened in 1964, the Tōkaidō Shinkansen—the first bullet train, dubbed the "dream super-express"—represents the bold aspirations of a nation rebranding itself after military defeat, but also the deep problems caused by the unbridled postwar drive for economic growth. Understanding the various, often contradictory, images of the bullet train shows how infrastructure operates beyond its intended use as a means of transportation to perform cultural and sociological functions and reveals the tug-of-war over the significance of the new line that is often hidden by commonplace stories of progress. This talk will trace contrasting meanings assigned to high-speed rail in order to find the ways in which it prompted a reimagining of identity on the levels of individual, metropolis, and nation in a changing Japan.



Speaker: Jessamyn R. Abel is College of the Liberal Arts Endowed Fellow, Associate Professor in the Asian Studies Department, and Affiliated Faculty of the School of International Affairs at Pennsylvania State University. She is a historian of modern Japan with interests in cultural history, technology, infrastructure, sports, and international relations. She is the author of two books including *Dream Super-Express: A Cultural History of the World's First Bullet Train* (2022).