The 2011 Great East Japan Disaster – a compound catastrophe of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown that began on March 11, 2011 – ushered in a new era of cultural production in Japan, where discussions on safety and security, risk and vulnerability, and recovery and reconstruction proliferated on an unprecedented scale. Against the backdrop of pervasive precarity, resilience-building became a national doctrine, mobilizing cultural icons such as Godzilla, KonMari, and Hula Girls and disseminating new idioms and practices of self help (jijo) and mutual help (kyōjo). This talk analyzes how this post-disaster mobilization provided an opportunity for Japan to articulate a new national vision in which militarism, neoliberalism, and neoconservatism played salient roles. Specifically the talk focuses on the popularization of Hula Girls after 3.11, where Hawai‘i and its simulacrum Spa Resort Hawaiians in Fukushima were enlisted to spread the spirit of Aloha, revitalize the weakened nation, and strengthen regional bonds (kizuna) in the Pacific. The dynamics thus activated by 3.11 continue today, as the COVID-19 crisis has given rise to KizunAloha, a bi-national project involving Japan and Hawai‘i whose aim is to enhance regional resilience in the face of the global pandemic.

* After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. The Zoom recording will be available after the webinar on CJS’ YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtgzULNdn0dKwFlx34b_WNQ