



Pacific Connections Seminar Series

Join us each month throughout the spring semester for scholarly presentations from Hawai'i and Tahiti using videoconference technology. These live presentations will be given by faculty at the University of French Polynesia, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and the East-West Center.

Thursdays – 14 February, 7 March, and 18 April

12:00 pm

John A. Burns Hall, Room 3121/3125 (3rd floor), East-West Center

March 7 **“Who Am I to Extol Tupaia?” Tahitian Voices in a Māori Project about the Pacific**

Alice Te Punga Somerville, Department of English, UH Mānoa

When Cook and his crew visited Aotearoa in 1769, Tupaia from Ra'iatea not only acted as translator between Europeans and Māori but also recorded first exchanges in a painting. Reflecting on the role of Ma'ohi people during these encounters, Māori poet Robert Sullivan asks “who am I to extol Tupaia . . . who am I to say these things?” How, indeed, do we write about connections between Pacific people? In the Pacific, how can we tell stories of ourselves without telling stories of each other, and yet how do we avoid—as Sullivan puts it —“tak[ing] the middle of your throat[s]”? Dr Te Punga Somerville will consider the contributions of Tupaia's painting and Chantal Spitz's writing to her book *Once Were Pacific: Māori connections to Oceania*, which explores Māori/Pacific connections at the regional and national levels. We are used to talking about the problem of disconnections between Pacific people at the regional level, often for contemporary linguistic and political reasons; what risks and possibilities emerge when we attempt to work around and beyond them?

Alice Te Punga Somerville (Māori - Te Ātiawa) is an Associate Professor in English, specializing in Pacific Literatures. After receiving her PhD from Cornell University, she taught for seven years at Victoria University of Wellington. Her first book, *Once Were Pacific* (University of Minnesota Press 2012), explores Māori/ Pacific connections. She also writes the occasional poem.

This seminar is cosponsored by the Center for Biographical Research and the Department of English.

For additional information and disability access, please contact Katherine Higgins at 956-2658 or khiggins@hawaii.edu. The University of Hawai'i is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.



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