



**Title of the presentation:** On Not Turning Japanese American in Hawai'i: Literary Representations of National and Cultural Identities

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### Short biography

Professor Ruth Y. Hsu's research interests include Asian American literary and cultural studies, contemporary United States studies, the discursive intersections of nationalism, gender, racial and ethnic identity formations, and cultural transnationalism. She is co-editor with Professor Pamela Thoma (Washington State University) on a Modern Language Association volume titled, *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Karen Tei Yamashita* (forthcoming 2020); recent publications include chapters on the Netflix series, *Orange is the New Black*, Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* and *Brazil Maru*. An essay on Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* is under consideration for a special issue of *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*. Hsu received her doctorate in English from the University of Southern California, whereupon she received her appointment to the faculty of the University of Hawai'i as an Asian American specialist. She has lived in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Los Angeles. Currently, she resides in Honolulu.

### Abstract

According to the US national Census in 2000, descendants of Japanese alone (not combined through intermarriage with other ethnic groups) constituted 16.7% of the total population of Hawai'i. Today, Japanese Americans are the second largest Asian group in the 50th State of the United States. This talk will focus on literature, plays, and films produced by Americans of Japanese descent who consider themselves local Japanese; the word, "local," refers to persons who have lived in Hawai'i their whole lives or for generations. The texts that I will analyze in this talk represent crucial events in the formation of local Japanese culture, which many local Japanese writers argue is unique from Japanese American culture in the continental US, and not to be conflated, that is, local Japanese have distinctive histories, culture, and literature from Japanese Americans in the US. This talk will analyze novels and a movie about the plantation experience, the arrest and internment of many Issei, and the origins and development of anti-Japanese sentiment and educational policies, including the Americanization program aimed at schoolchildren prior to the outbreak of World War II and the more recent concept of Asian settler colonialism aimed against all Asians in Hawai'i. In the first group, on plantations, I shall analyze Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For Is My Body*, and the 1994 film, *Picture Bride*; in the second group, on the incarceration of Issei, *Life Behind Barbed Wire: The World War II Internment Memoirs of a Hawai'i Issei* by Yasutaro Soga; and then this talk will examine the work of Lois-Ann Yamanaka, Richard Hamasaki, Lee Tonouchi's writing in Hawai'i Creole English, and the ongoing contribution of *Bamboo Ridge* journal to the distinctive oeuvre of local Japanese literature.