

# CPAS Seminar, Globalizing American Studies

Center for Pacific and American Studies, U-Tokyo

## Theorizing Disability, Access, and Intimacy in Twentieth Century American Fiction



Speaker: Evan Chaloupka

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Characters with cognitive differences appeared in American literature long before the clinical awakening to neurodivergence; and so their creators were tasked with depicting them without contemporary classifications or labels. These writers responded to questions that authors of disability literature continue to face today. How and to what extent should disabled cognition show up on the page? When does imaginative attention become creative exploitation? With close readings of writers like Jean Toomer, Pearl S. Buck, and Saul Bellow, this talk examines how authors deployed novel storytelling strategies at key moments in American literary and cultural history to bring readers into new relationships with cognitive disability and mental difference. Modeling a new mode of rhetorical reading, it demonstrates how different storytelling techniques can enable the intimacies of fiction—however distant writer, reader, and character might at first seem from one another.

Discussant: Kenji Kihara

Associate Professor, Department of English,  
College of Liberal Arts, Tsuda University



**Date & Time:** 13:00 – 15:00, Saturday, April 4, 2026

**Venue:** Collaboration Room #2, 18th Building, Komaba I  
Campus, the University of Tokyo

**Organizer:** Center for Pacific and American Studies, U-Tokyo

**Cosponsor:** Institute for Advanced Global Studies, U-Tokyo

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