Stigma and the Moral Economy of Tokyo's Sex Industry

Speaker: Dr Gabriele Koch, Yale-NUS College

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Abstract
Contemporary Japan is home to one of the world’s largest and most diversified markets for heteronormative sex. This talk asks how adult Japanese women working in Tokyo’s legal sex industry manage a problem central to their work: it is both uniquely lucrative and stigmatizing, simultaneously opening up possibility at the same time that it is unmentionable. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, in this talk I explore how the sexual economy is always also a moral economy shaped by ideologies of whom or what women’s labor should be for.

About the Speaker
Gabriele Koch is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Yale-NUS College. Her research examines how globalizing rights discourses intersect with longstanding histories of gender, labor, and care in urban Japan. Her first book, Healing Labor: Japanese Sex Work in the Gendered Economy, will be published with Stanford University Press in 2020.