

Looking East for Ethics

Tetsuro Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, and Communitarianism

A case-study lecture
by Dr. Rick Kenney
Georgia Regents University, U.S.A.



Communitarian thought is neither new nor original—nor even Western. It may have had its modern roots in *Rinrigaku*. Hear a talk about how philosopher **Tetsuro Watsuji**'s notions of *privacy*, *trust*, and *mutuality* may be applied to the case of global media coverage of an ambiguously sexed world-champion athlete.



South African sprinter Caster Semenya's victory in the 800-meter race at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin resulted in controversy over whether she was a woman. The sport's governing body, the IAAF, conducted sex-verification tests on Semenya without her knowledge.

The controversy about Semenya's sex—the ultimate intimate story of the individual writ large on a global script—provides a rich text for ethical critique of press coverage. The ethical notions of Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji prove valuable in examining the traditional Western journalistic craft practices and principles that were at play in invading Semenya's privacy.

This lecture by communication scholar and media ethicist **Dr. Rick Kenney** will trace the roots of certain Western Communitarian ideals to the seminal work by philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji in his 1937 *Rinrigaku*. Although Watsuji's ideas about environmentalism and other issues have influenced Western thinking, this lecture will question and seek to answer why the West has been so slow to explore Watsuji's writing for applicability to media ethics. Using the case of media coverage of South African sprinter Caster Semenya, Dr. Kenney will demonstrate the value of Watsuji's ideas as a normative ethics.



Please join us at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, June 9th, 2015, in Auditorium in Center for Academic and Cultural Exchange Building at Aichi Prefectural University.