



The Department of East Asian Studies is pleased to announce a talk by

## Dr. Gregory Smits



# Catfish Catastrophe: Japanese Earthquake Prints from 1855

At about 10pm on November 11, 1885, a strong earthquake shook Edo (modern Tokyo), Japan's de facto capital. The earthquake killed roughly 8,000 and did extensive damage to certain areas of the city. Along with death and destruction, the earthquake created opportunities for windfall profits for many of the city's ordinary residents. One product of this earthquake was hundreds of varieties of broadside prints. These prints came to be called "catfish prints" (*namazue*) because many of them featured catfish, which symbolized the power of earthquakes. Gregory Smits discusses the significance of the Ansei Edo earthquake using examples from the collection of high quality earthquake prints held by the Royal Ontario Museum.

Gregory Smits is associate professor of history and Asian studies at Pennsylvania State University. His recent research deals with earthquakes in Japan, and he is the author of *Seismic Japan: The Long History and Continuing Legacy of the Ansei Edo Earthquake* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2013) and several articles on earthquake prints. He has recently completed *Before 3.11*, a book length study of earthquakes in modern Japan.

Wednesday, December 4, 2013 at 2 pm  
Purple Lounge, 14<sup>th</sup> floor, Robarts Library