

# ASHBi SEMINAR

## Models & Monsters: A history of ideas in the study and synthesis of human embryos

Lecturer: **Douglas Sipp**

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Date **Friday, 19 December 2025**

Time **16:00 – 17:00 [JST]**

Venue **Conference Room Onsite Only\***  
**B1F, Faculty of Medicine Bldg. B**

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### Abstract

The conceptus (embryo, fetus) occupies a transitional space in the human life cycle, exhibiting many hallmarks of what anthropologists refer to as “liminality.” No matter their origin or state of health, liminal entities are often perceived or described as monstrous. For much of its history, human embryology has also evinced a fascination with “monsters” a term commonly used to describe congenital anomalies in both animal and man. (The word itself derives from the Latin verb *monēre* (“to warn,” “to foretell”) reflecting beliefs in the appearance of anomalous monsters as indicators of divine displeasure.) Taking examples from myth, folklore, fiction, film and the history of science, I will explore the history of liminal monstrosity in both human development and experimental embryology up to the present day, with a specific focus on contemporary nomenclature debates surrounding the emergence of techniques for deriving human embryos in the laboratory.

A splendid time is guaranteed for all.

Organizer : Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Biology (WPI-ASHBi), Kyoto University

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