

Chinese Studies Graduate Summer School

Student Sessions

Asia-Pacific Week 27-30 Jan, 2009

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Investigating Barriers and Pathways to the Empowerment of Domestic Workers

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Married Migrant Women in the Garment Industry in South China

Jason YOUNG, Victoria University Wellington

Migrant Agency, Market Reform & China's Enduring Hukou Institution: 1978-2007

Session 6 - Communication Studies (4 papers)

Jie YOU, University of Canterbury

Film Piracy in Contemporary China: Foe or Friend to Hollywood

Dong Yong TIAN, University of South Australia

Rising Middle class, Media Freedom and Nationalism in Mainland China

Siling LI, QUT

The Turn to the Self: User-Created Content in China

Rui LIU, QUT

Competition and Creation: Private TV Independent Production in China

Abstracts

Session 1 - Literature and Culture (2 papers)

Catherine INGRAM
University of Melbourne

When Kam big songs \"cha tai\" (take the stage)

For many Kam people living in southeastern Guizhou villages, big song singing is still an important activity. At each New Year, after learning songs from village song experts during the year, singing groups go to the village's pagoda-shaped \"dare low\" to sing. The process of big song learning and singing remains important in maintaining Kam oral history, philosophy, aesthetics and social structure, as well as being a multi-sensory expression of identity and relationship. Unlike this centuries-old village tradition, staged big song performances have only occurred during the last fifty years. Yet their recent escalation, when combined with massive social changes of recent decades, has influenced these village traditions in unprecedented ways. My paper draws on observations of and participation in Kam singing during 24 months of fieldwork in Kam villages (2004-2008) to discuss and analyse some of the ways these changes are unfolding.

Hongwei BAO
University of Sydney

Comrade Chinese Modern: Constructing Gay Identities in Post-Mao China

As a product of modern times, homosexuality, among others, best illustrates the ambivalence of modernity. Modern society, charactered by its imperative for order and certainty, tries to marginalise, territorialise and even eliminate homosexuality because of its ambivalence and in-betweenness. The same imperative, paradoxically, needs the existence of homosexuality to affirm the order of a society. In my thesis, I examine how gay identities have been constructed in post-Mao Chinese society and what this tells us about modernity and modernity in China in particular. Three sources of literature will be examined: (1) Historical documents including medical cases, legal records and media reports to see how gay identities were constructed by different discourses in the 1980s and 90s; (2) Textual analysis (and audience studies) of some literature and film texts to see how popular cultural texts engage in the construction of gay identity; (3) Bulletin board on an online gay community to see how gay people construct their own identities.

Session 2 – Education (2 papers)

Ping WANG
University of Queensland

A Case Study of EFL Teachers' Professional Development in China

This study is an investigation of the implementation of a Community of Practice (CoP) model in a Chinese higher education institution. It aimed to examine the implementation of the CoP model in a Chinese higher education institution and explore the processes of the adoption of this model. Data were collected from multiple sources. These included a pre-PD questionnaire of 30 EFL teachers at the department of English of a Chinese university, pre-PD individual interviews of the four teachers who participated in the CoP, observations of a ten-week PD, post-PD interviews, and on-line blogging. Findings from the study will contribute to a better understanding of the implementation of the CoP transformative model and provide empirical evidence to inform the future design and expansion of the model to effectively meet the professional development needs of Chinese EFL teachers working at the tertiary level.

Lee Huei SOONG
University of South Australia

Service Learning and its impact on Chinese International Pre-service Teachers

The focus of this research is to explore how experiences in community service learning impacts upon Chinese international pre-service teachers who are undertaking postgraduate teacher education in Australia. The study aims to develop an understanding of how participation in community service learning influences Chinese international pre-service teachers' perceptions, meanings, and values about community service; and how such experiences impact upon preparation to teach in Australia. It seeks to achieve this aim by examining the pre-service teachers' accounts of their efforts to reflect on the multiple social, personal, and cultural understandings of their experience in community service learning, and the demands of their teacher education programme. In order to search for deeper understandings, this study will take on a hermeneutic phenomenology orientation by recording the stories told through journals, interviews and focus group discussions.

Session 3 - Economics and Geography (4 papers)

Zhiming CHENG
Macquarie University

China's Urban Poverty in the Danwei Communities

In China's transition to a market economy, the old socialist system, which included full employment and comprehensive social welfare for urban citizens, has been replaced by an emerging labor market and a socialized or privatized social security. The collapse of the old system has thrown a large number of retrenched state workers into poverty and concentrated the poor in particular danwei (work units) communities. The situation is particularly severe in those post-industrialized cities once boosted by the pre-reform planning economy. This study specifically addresses urban poverty in low-income communities of state-owned enterprise residential areas of two cities in northeastern and southwestern China, namely Shenyang and Chongqing. The two-step study firstly profiles the characteristics of households/individuals from regional to individual levels, and secondly identifies (1) the relationship between these

characteristics and poverty, and (2) the main determinants of poverty. The results showed that within a region urban low income households suffered multidimensional disadvantages due to a number of factors including increasing inequality, industrial reconstruction, legacies of the socialist system and the policy and financial burdens of their (previous) affiliated danwei. For individual households, employment status, position of the household head and the sector where the household head was employed, were important factors in overcoming poverty. The rising poverty in urban communities indicates that a substantial number of residents do not benefit a great deal from development. Moreover, degradation of these communities increases the risk of becoming slum creation and marginalization. Urban poverty research is a recently emerging topic in China and to date has mainly focus at the macro level. Further investigation of the effects of social and economic factors on specific poverty concentration communities is needed, however, to inform and impact policy-making at all levels.

Kai REBENSBURG
University of Melbourne

Understanding factors that influence farmers' use of groundwater

Irrigation farmers in the North China Plain increasingly rely on groundwater as their sole water source. The rapid growth in use has played a vital role in maintaining the increase in agricultural production. However, falling groundwater tables, salinisation and land subsidence bring into question the future exploitation of the resource. In this presentation, I will talk about the unsustainable use of groundwater in rural villages in North China. I argue that farmers' irrigation water use partly depends on the groundwater table depth of the tube well. In my PhD research project I compare two research sites in Hebei with variation in groundwater table depth to prove its influence on farmers' use of groundwater. The impact of the local implementation of national agricultural policies on rural households' water use will also be explored in this presentation.

Kelly DOMBROSKI
RSPAS, ANU

Maternal subjectivities and the flow of cross-cultural parenting practices between Australia and China

My PhD research began with some ethnographic study of Hui mothers' work in the multi-ethnic city of Xining, Qinghai province. Throughout my initial fieldwork in China, I was also caring for my baby, and adapting many local parenting customs for our own family. I am now focusing on the cross-cultural flow of certain parenting practices such as early infant hygiene, infant feeding practices and childcare, as part of the performance of maternal subjectivities, using ethnographic and interview data from mothers actively drawing on practices from other cultures. In China this may take the form of adapting certain Western or Han Chinese practices in order to 'perform' oneself as an empowered modern maternal subject in opposition to traditional and state discourses of motherhood and backwardness. In Australia this can take the form of adapting traditional Chinese practices as a form of resistance to the

encroachment of the market and the state into the realm of mothering. This has implications for the politics of the maternal subject, as women draw on parenting techniques across time, space and culture to infuse them with new meaning and to actively shape maternal subjectivities.

Hongyan GU
University of Sydney

The politics of environmental knowledge in China

China's environmental politics is an emerging field of study. It examines environmental issues from the perspectives of governance, policy and environmental movements. It also encourages cross-fertilisation of ideas from multiple disciplines. Doing a PhD in this field has proven to be challenging yet fruitful and life-changing. My research focuses on the evolution of environmental knowledge in China with particular reference to environmental impact assessment (EIA). EIA is an American-rooted concept and is globally recognized as an important public involvement tool for environmental decision-making. EIA was first introduced to China in the early 1970s, but it is not until recently that EIA has become a buzzword. My thesis explores the socio-political changes that have given rise to the EIA controversies, e.g., damming the Nu River. Through empirical studies, it highlights the problematic relationship between expert and lay knowledge. How to reconcile the two has become crucial for China's future development.

Session 4 – International Relations & Policy (3 papers)

Evi Fitriani
Crawford School, ANU

China in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Process

As one of the biggest country in East Asia, China has been, somehow, expected to take some role in the leadership of the regional building. However, due to its delicate relations with another Asian regional power -Japan, China has taken prudent and seemingly reluctant approach to assert more leadership measures. Both countries, while letting the ASEAN to occupy the driver seat in the ASEM process, have, in fact, been engaging in a competitive process to influence the regional events. As the EU has more interest on China than in any other Asian members of the ASEM, China apparently uses its leverage to boost its soft power regionally and inter-regionally as shown at the 7th ASEM Summit in Beijing in October 2008.

Jia GUAN
Dept. of IR, RSPAS, ANU

Chinese discourse on soft power

Since Joseph Nye's concept of soft power was invented, it has gained great attentions all over the world. Though Nye's concept has primarily been associated with the United States, some Western scholars has applied it to study other countries' soft power like China. However, is soft power a universal concept? Can Nye's definition of soft power and his arguments about American soft power be applied to the case of China, a country which is very different from America in many aspects? A comprehensive study on how China understands its own soft power and how China has considered wielding it should be conducted. In my paper, Chinese debates on soft power are analyzed surrounding the following four aspects, the origins of the connotation of soft power, Chinese conception of soft power, the sources of China 抐 soft power and finally a conclusion of what China has and has-not in terms of its soft power.

Yao-chung CHANG
Regnet, ANU

Regulatory responses to the cybercrime problem across Taiwan and China Strait

Some reports have already shown that most of the cyber-attacks toward Taiwan are originated from China and vice versa. Nevertheless, unlike the mutual help between other countries, the special political situation makes it difficult for both countries to build up a mutual help on combating cybercrimes. Under this circumstances, Taiwan or China are now becoming the heaven of those motivated-offenders to start cyber-wrongs to the opposite side. In order to prevent this problem becoming more serious, the research will, through interviewing law enforcements, risk manager or IT manager of enterprises, and other experts related in Taiwan and China, focus on discovering efficient regulatory pluralisms and substitute ways to combat cybercrimes across Taiwan and China Strait.

Session 5 - Migration and Labour (4 papers)

Thomas CLIFF
Contemporary China Centre, ANU

Oil and Water: Diverse Experiences of Migration to Xinjiang

The nature and constituency of Han Chinese migration to Xinjiang has changed dramatically in the past fifteen years, largely as a result of the policy to rapidly urbanise the Autonomous Region. These new migrants represent a wide range of socio-economic groups, from people with only the most basic skills to technicians and professionals. Some come for the lifestyle and some come simply to make money, but the vast majority come voluntarily. Contradictions exist, however: despite the standard of living in Xinjiang's leading urban centers easily surpassing that of many cities further east, coercive relocation of professionals such as teachers is still used to supplement the labor force. This presentation examines the perspectives, aspirations, and socio-spatial environment of individual migrants to Korla, Xinjiang. I will use this series of recent examples, migrants' own stories, to raise questions about motives, ethics, and methodology in the field.

Mei-Ling Ellerman

ANU

Investigating Barriers and Pathways to the Empowerment of Domestic Workers

My PhD research will investigate the barriers that inhibit the development of Chinese migrant domestic workers' agency, critical consciousness and voice. Isolated within their workplace, and dependant upon their employer for food, board and wages, domestic workers are unusually vulnerable to discriminatory and exploitative situations. The women frequently feel that they lack the capacity to resolve workplace problems, and choose to endure a difficult situation or leave to find another job. Using a feminist research approach, I will also use discussion groups to address research topics, and issues important to the workers. A feeling of empowerment through dialogue can engender changes in consciousness and action. The theoretical foundation for my interviews will employ theories from social psychology, development studies and education that involve an individual's learning, knowing, identity, and agency. I will also study theory on participation, critical consciousness and empowerment to inform my discussion groups.

Yuzhen LIU

York University, Canada

Married Migrant Women in the Garment Industry in South China

Behind China's economic boom are a large scale rural-to-urban migration and an enlarging rural/urban gap regarding living options and living standard. Women, especially married women's participation into the migration has affected the organization of production and social reproduction in the factory, the family, and the state levels. Based on interviews with 40 migrant women in garment industries in Guangdong province and interviews with family members left behind in Hunan province, this paper explores migration experiences of rural women and their economic and political implications. Despite of migrant women's valuable economic contribution to the industry and to their families, a crisis of social reproduction is forming, in terms of their working and living conditions in migration and caregiving to the second generation. The irresponsibility of global capital to social reproduction and the insufficient supply of social welfare to migrant workers and their families have affected the sustainable development of China's economy.

Jason Young

Victoria University Wellington

Migrant Agency, Market Reform & China's Enduring Hukou Institution: 1978-2007

During China's static decades (late 1950s - late 1970s), internal migration was heavily restricted by economic planning, state allocation of public resources and government

limits on migrations. The mechanism for controlling migration and settlement was and still remains the hukou institution. Since the policy of reform and opening, the number of people involved in migration and settlement has grown rapidly. Conservative estimates show that there are now over 130 million nongmingong residing in Chinese cities without local urban hukou. This paper asks how this and associated government institutions are adapting to the challenge of China's growing labour market and the millions of unregistered residents in China's once protected urban areas and argues that there is both a dynamic relationship between economic reform, migrant agency and institutional adaptations as well as an enduring path dependency restricting the nature of that reform.

Session 6 - Communication Studies (4 papers)

Jie YOU

University of Canterbury

Film Piracy in Contemporary China: Foe or Friend to Hollywood

The Hollywood film industry has tendered vociferous complaints to China about a persistent and malignant problem: film piracy. According to an official statement made by the Motion Pictures Association of America, in recent years, film piracy in China has cost millions of dollars in revenue loss annually. However, such indictments, while arguable in bottom line monetary terms, overlook a positive side-effect, namely, the tremendous boost pirate activities generate in distributing the filmic medium (and Hollywood films especially) to the general populace. The reductive nature of the term piracy also serves to obscure the distinctive context of China's highly regulated film market and heavy-handed film censorship. Juxtaposing qualitative and quantitative sources, this paper asserts that, far from a detrimental blight on the cinematic landscape, film piracy in contemporary China probably matches the best marketing efforts to prepare Chinese people as willing, active consumers of Hollywood films and film-related products.

Dong Yong TIAN

University Of South Australia

Rising Middle class, Media Freedom and Nationalism in Mainland China

This thesis will collect and analysis data to draw a picture of the media commercialization process in mainland China; to investigate the relationship between the rising middle class, media freedom, and Chinese nationalism, Chinese nationalism's impact on the international community will also be discussed. All these will be examined by answering a number of questions like: What requirement and challenges the rising middle class will bring to Chinese media? How does the Chinese media balance its political, economic and social functions under market economic? How the Chinese nationalism use internet to express themselves and how the government try hard to filter the information.

Siling LI
QUT

The Turn to the Self: User-Created Content in China

This presentation explores the process by which user-created content in contemporary China has evolved from being appropriated as a weapon of political mobilization and accusation to serving as vehicles of independent self-representation. The analysis is set in the context of the social, political and economic metamorphosis that China has undergone in the past four decades and foregrounds the dynamics of political, economic and technological forces that has been transforming Chinese media and the way media users have been (mis-)represented. Three forms of user-created content, Big Character Posters, unofficial journals and networked videos, each representing one period of this historical process, are discussed and used to chart the contours of the struggle for self-expression and representation. The presentation concludes with a brief discussion of the political and social implications of networked user created media content for China.

Rui LIU
QUT

Competition and Creation: Private TV Independent Production in China

As everyone knows, all of China's mass media is the state-owned. However, since the first private independent TV production company was registered officially in 1994 in Chinese trade department, nearly over 1000 independent TV production companies have appeared in China's TV industry. My research will focus on this special group in China's TV industry to explore the essentials of the innovation and the transformation of the policy, the market and the technology. I will reveal the whole market of TV industry in China through their living ecology so that we can understand more details about the underground rules and inside information in the TV market trade. In my opinion, this group can be the best research object to reflect the changes and reforms in the whole China's TV industry. Furthermore, we can see a much wider stage is waiting for them in the future with the deeper reform in China's economy.