

Visiting Speaker Series 2017-18 Term 1

Is China a post-secular society? The appearance of *xinyang* in Chinese political discourse

Gerda WIELANDER

Associate Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Cultures,
University of Westminster, London

7 Dec 2017 (Thursday)

4:00 – 5:30pm

Room 1118, 11/F,

Yasumoto International Academic Park



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Gerda Wielander is Associate Professor in Chinese Studies and Head of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Westminster, London. Her research focuses on the link between the spiritual and the political in contemporary China. She is the author of *Christian Values in Communist China* (Routledge 2013), editor of *Chinese Discourses on Happiness* (Hong Kong University Press 2018), as well author of a number of journal articles (in *The China Journal*, *The China Quarterly*, and *The Journal of Contemporary China*) and book chapters on the subject of Chinese Christianity. Her current project focuses on the recent development of “Chinese cultural psychology”. She is co-editor of *The Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*.

ABOUT THE TALK

The paper analyses if China can be considered a post-secular society in Habermas’ sense by focusing on the appearance of the word faith (信仰) in recent Chinese political discourse. The paper will show who talks about faith in China today and in what way; it will further show the points of agreement and fundamental differences in the understanding of faith between different discourses. It will ask whether the emphasis on *xinyang* in official discourse is a recognition of the importance of religion in Chinese society today and whether this adoption of spiritual language is what Habermas (2008) refers to as a necessary “complementary learning process of religious and secular mentalities” in a post-secular society, whether this appearance and use of the term *xinyang* is an example of how religious voices are “translated” (to stay with Habermas) in a process where secular contributions “pass from the confused din of voices in the public sphere into the formal agendas of state institutions”. The paper also questions the ways in which the use of *xinyang* in government discourse is linked to the promotion of “Chinese values” and how, through its use, China positions itself as rigid secularist in its domestic discourse, but as cultural relativist in the international arena.

Free Admission

The seminar is conducted in English

Enquiry: Centre for China Studies | ccs@cuhk.edu.hk | www.cuhk.edu.hk/ccs