

# Redefining Fieldwork in Contemporary China

## *Migrant workers' cultural practices in post-Mao China: exploring struggles around the politics of recognition and "regimes of appearance"*

**Professor Eric Florence**

CEFC (French Centre for Research on Contemporary China), University of Liege

**23 November 2017 (Thursday) 5 - 6:30 PM**

**Seminar room 1101, 11/F Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus**

Light refreshments provided

Rural migrants workers' experiences are woven into complex social, political and cultural fields. Their narrations of mobility and more or less successful attempts to negotiate social hierarchies are often articulated with reference to society's core norms and values, as well as with processes of state formation. In this brief talk, I argue that in studying how Chinese migrant workers' agency is at once enabling and shaped by structural forces there is a need to focus on processes of "mediation" as these processes enable to think seriously the relationship between *institutions/organisations*, people and meanings. Focusing on processes of mediation enables to deal with how people's subjectivities and agency are shaped in complex and never totalizing ways by the very *institutions* through which they mediate their experiences. Looking chiefly at three forms of mediation of rural workers' experiences of social mobility (ethnographic work, popular literature and musical performances), I suggest, enables to document workers' agency and to engage with the complex dialectics of being-represented and self-representation.



**Eric Florence** is the Director and Researcher of the French Centre for Research on Contemporary China (CEFC), and also Associate Professor of the University of Liege, Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies. His research fields include cultural politics and representation of labour in contemporary China, identity politics and state formation in post-Mao China and migration studies (politics of illegalisation and informalisation).

## Book Launch & Christmas Party

Co-presented with the Department of History

**Robert Kramm: *Sanitized Sex: Regulating Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Intimacy in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952***

Date & Time : 7 December, 2017 (Thursday) 5PM

Venue : Run Run Shaw Heritage House

