Maids, Mistresses, and Wives: Rethinking Kinship and the Domestic Sphere in Twenty-First Century Global Hong Kong

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24 Feb 2016 (Wed)
4:30-6:00 pm
Wang Gungwu Theatre, Graduate House, HKU

This talk builds on Rubie Watson's article, "Wives, Concubines and Maids: Servitude and Kinship in the Hong Kong Region, 1900-1940" in which she points to the importance of non-kin, such as concubines and maids, within Hong Kong households (1991). Extending her analysis to the 21st century, I ask how Hong Kong households and the foreign domestic workers they hire differ from the household non-kin of earlier eras, and how they form a variety of "stretched" and "temporary" transnational families. Like the families of the past, such families reflect social inequalities and sometimes blur the lines between wives, mistresses, and maids.

Nicole Constable is JY Pillay Professor of Social Sciences at Yale-NUS College and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research focuses on transnational migration and mobilities; the commodification of intimacy; and gender, sexuality and reproductive labor. She is the author of Maid to Order in Hong Kong. Her latest book, Born Out of Place: Migrant Mothers and the Politics of International Labor (University of California Press and Hong Kong University Press), is about Filipina and Indonesian migrant workers who become mothers in Hong Kong, and the legal and personal struggles they face regarding migrant work, intimate relationships, and parenthood.

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All are welcome. No registration is required.
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