



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE FOR CHINESE STUDIES

ICS presents the "Re-Imagining China's Past and Present" Lecture Series

Torrents of Revolution: Writing Environmental Disasters in Republican China

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Friday, February 23, 2018
4:00-5:30 pm
Mendenhall Lab 191
125 S Oval Mall



Abstract: This talk considers how written narratives have shaped the meaning of environmental disasters in Republican China by envisioning political rhetoric and practice in a time of crisis. Traditionally, premodern flood myths not only describe the origins of Chinese civilization, but also legitimize political institutions in the process. During the Republican period, authors such as Tian Han, Xia Yan, and Ding Ling refashioned narratives about extreme weather events into allegories of China's future. These narratives often contain scenes in which citizens deliberate over the appropriate course of action in the face of an environmental disaster. Whereas existing scholarship tends to interpret these narratives as endorsing political revolution in China, I suggest that they indicate a wider spectrum of political rhetoric and practice. This talk focuses on the interplay between human and nonhuman efficacies, exploring how marginalized members of human society along with nonhuman beings and extreme weather impact the cultural, social, and political landscape of Republican China. In addition to analyzing literary and historical narratives, I will present documents that I found at the Second Historical Archive, a repository for Republican-era government documents, in Nanjing, China.

Bio: Christopher K. Tong is an assistant professor of Chinese and Asian Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and currently serves on the executive committee of the Modern Language Association's Modern and Contemporary Chinese Forum. Prior to joining the University of Maryland, he taught at Washington University in St. Louis as a postdoctoral fellow. His research focuses on ecological thinking and the representation of environmental disasters in modern China. His publications have appeared in *Chinese Literature*, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, and edited volumes such as *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan*.

Free and Open to the Public

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