



# INSTITUTE FOR CHINESE STUDIES

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## "Male Same-Sex Relations in Socialist China"

a lecture by

# Wenqing Kang

Associate Professor of History  
Cleveland State University

**Friday, January 30, 2015**

**3:00 pm**

**Jennings Hall, Room 140  
(1735 Neil Avenue)**

Historical studies tend to depict the Mao era of China as sexually repressive. The only legitimate sexual intercourse was between a man and a woman within government-sanctioned marriage. No public discussion of homosexuality could be found in the official media from the 1950s to the 1970s and sex between men seemed impossible to exist. Government archives are not open to academic research on homosexuality in the Mao era. Personal narratives become a crucially important source to study this part of Chinese history. In the past few years, Kang travelled to various cities in China to meet men in their 60s and 70s who were willing to tell stories of their queer past. Questions include: How did the sexual life of men whose object of sexual desire was other men look like? Is it even possible to discuss these men's sexual happiness of during the Mao era? How could their stories contribute to our understanding of the history of socialist China? While one hears stories that confirm the sexual repressiveness of the period, there were also stories of men who enjoyed their sex with other men during the Mao era. Kang suggests that even in a sexually repressive social environment of socialist China, some people were still pursuing their sexual happiness.



### Bio

Wenqing Kang is an associate professor in the Department of History. Before arriving at CSU, he taught at the Pacific Lutheran University. He received his B.A. from the Institute of International Relations, Beijing, China, and an M.A. in U.S. History from the University of Denver. He also completed an M.A. from the John W. Draper Interdisciplinary Master's Program in Humanities and Social Thought at New York University before commencing his doctoral studies in Chinese History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His research interest is history of gender and sexuality in China. His book "Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900-1950" was published in April 2009 by Hong Kong University Press. He is currently researching homosexuality in The People's Republic of China. His article "Decriminalization and Depathologization of Homosexuality in China" is included in the book *China In and Beyond the Headlines* published by Rowman and Littlefield Publishers (2012). He is the recipient of American Council of Learned Societies fellowship.

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For more information, please contact:

Jeffrey Chan | [chan.184@osu.edu](mailto:chan.184@osu.edu) | 614-247-6893

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