

INSTITUTE FOR CHINESE STUDIES

Title VI NRC/ FLAS East Asian Studies Center

俄亥俄州立大学中国研究所

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"Animals are Not Authorized to Become Spirits after 1949!: Religion, Politics, and New Media in Contemporary China"

a lecture by

Zhange Ni

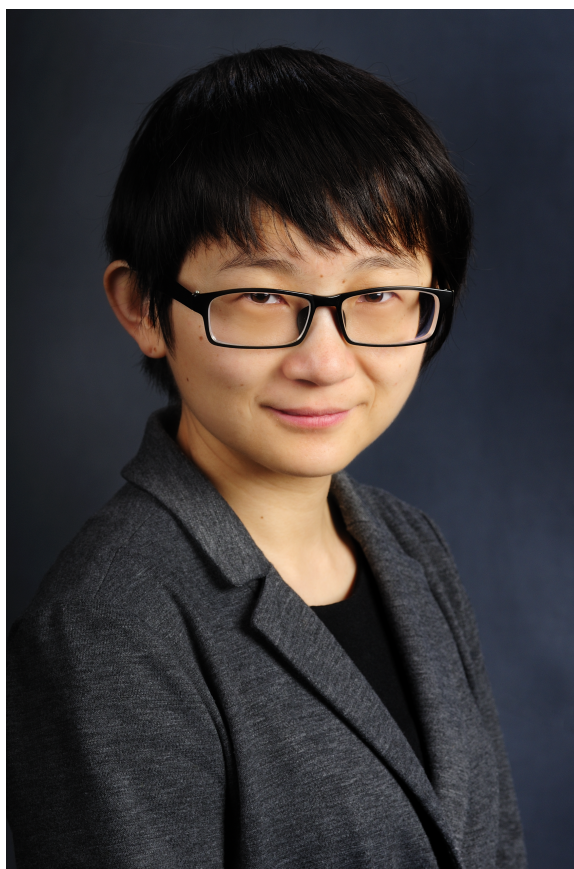
Assistant Professor of Religion and Culture
Virginia Tech University

Monday, March 9, 2015

3:00 pm

**Pomerene Hall, Room 208
(1760 Neil Avenue)**

This paper studies an Internet-based joke that mocks the Chinese state's media regulation policies by inventing a SARFT (State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television) order that would ban animal spirits on TV. The popularity of this faked ban sheds light on the gap between state-sanctioned epistemic secularism and popular fascination with the efficacious power of even non-human animals. It also attests to the persistence of the cosmological assumptions and institutional constructs of Chinese religion despite a whole range of secularization projects in the twentieth century. This paper aims to investigate the unique configuration of Chinese secularism as a problem space--where the boundaries of religion and politics are constantly being (re)negotiated--by bringing together not only ancient stories and new media but also state manipulation and popular appropriation.



Bio

Zhange Ni is an assistant professor in the Department of Religion and Culture, Virginia Tech. She received her Ph.D. in Religion and Literature at the University of Chicago Divinity School (2009) and did her postdoctoral work in the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School. Her first book *The Pagan Writes Back: When World Religion Meets World Literature* will be published by the University of Virginia Press in May 2015. She is currently working on two new projects that study the formation of Chinese secularism in the twentieth century and religion and politics in contemporary American and Chinese popular culture respectively.



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