



# China in the New Millennium: Art, Politics, and the Environment

Mt. San Antonio College - Third Annual Chinese Cultures &  
Histories Workshop

April 23, 2019 - Building 13 Auditorium

Dept of Education Grant: 2017-2020, "Enhancing Undergraduate Chinese  
Language and Culture Studies" - in partnership with the East-West Center  
(University of Hawaii) Asian Studies Development Program

<http://www.asdp-chinaproject.org/>

**Tuesday, April 23**

**Building 13 Auditorium**

**9:45 - 11:00 am *China's Environmental Challenges in a Long-term  
Historical Context***

Dr. Robert Marks, Professor of History, Whittier College

**1:15 - 2:30 pm *Art Worldings: Gender and Globalization in Chinese  
Contemporary Art***

Dr. Sasha Su-ling Welland, Associate Professor of Gender, Women, and Sexuality  
Studies, The University of Washington

**3:00 - 4:15 pm *Politics and Society in the Era of Xi Jinping: Novelties,  
Continuities, and the Rebirth of Old Phenomena***

Dr. Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Chancellor's Professor of History, University of California  
Irvine

Reasonable accommodations, including Sign Language Interpreters, can be provided upon  
request with 5 days advance notice. Please contact Allie Frickert, History Department,  
[africkert@mtsac.edu](mailto:africkert@mtsac.edu) with questions and concerns.

## Speaker Biographies and Talk Abstracts

**Robert Marks** is Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Whittier College. Since 1978, he has been teaching Chinese, East Asian, environmental, and world history at the College. His major publications include *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt: Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China* (1998); *China: An Environmental History* (2nd ed. 2017); and *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century* 4th ed. (2019). He was the 2008 winner of the Harry Nerhood Award for Excellent Teaching.

**Title:** *China's Environmental Challenges in a Long-term Historical Context*

**Sasha Su-Ling Welland** is Associate Professor of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies, Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology, and affiliate faculty in China Studies and Comparative History of Ideas at the University of Washington. Her research focuses on transnational feminisms, ethnographic aesthetics, and visual culture. She is the author of *A Thousand Miles of Dreams: The Journeys of Two Chinese Sisters* (2006) and *Experimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art* (2018).

**Title:** *Art Worldings: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art*

**Abstract:** During the lead-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the censorious attitude that characterized China's post-1989 official response to contemporary art gave way to a new market-driven, culture-industry valuation of art. Through ethnographic analysis of cultural encounters involving artists, curators, officials, and urban planners, this talk examines the interlocking power dynamics in this transformational moment and rapid rise of Chinese contemporary art into global phenomenon. A contentious encounter between U.S. feminist art icon Judy Chicago and Chinese artists, during a re-staging of the Communist Red Army's Long March as transnational art project, reveals and undoes center-periphery understandings of the world that have structured discourses of global art and global feminism. The subsequent work of Lei Yan, one of the participants in this encounter, draws attention to haunting absences in conventional stories of art, feminism, and nation. Her artistic practice produces a differential consciousness about the shifting role of art—as ideological, institutional, and imaginative—within various configurations of power. It also opens feminist sightlines of comparison with Ai Weiwei's globally recognized bad boy art of political dissent.

**Jeffrey Wasserstrom** is Chancellor's Professor of History and Chair of the Department at UC Irvine. His most recent books are, as co-author, the third edition of *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2018); as editor, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China* (2016); and, as author, *Eight Juxtapositions: China through Imperfect Analogies from Mark Twain to Manchukuo* (2018). He has written academic articles on topics ranging from Shanghai history to gender relations in the Chinese Revolution, and he frequently contributes to newspapers and magazines, often focusing on issues of protest and human rights.

**Title:** *Politics and Society in the Era of Xi Jinping: Novelties, Continuities, and the Rebirth of Old Phenomena*

**Abstract:** Is Xi leading China into uncharted territory? Is he just carrying forward trends that were underway when his immediate predecessor Hu Jintao was in power? Or is he moving China back to the way it was under Mao Zedong? Newspaper headlines sometimes encourage us to choose between these three options, but this talk will argue for the value of making room in our minds for all three options. If we focus on some aspects of politics and society, what Xi has proclaimed a "New Era" is indeed genuinely new, but if we focus on others there is a great deal of continuity with what came just before it, and if we focus on still others we see the return of patterns from earlier period.