

# Friday Seminar

## Filial Piety Goes to the Clinic: One Encounter, Two Ethics

Feb 7

1:00 - 2:30PM

NAH 213



**Teresa Kuan** is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at CUHK. She is the author of *Love's Uncertainty: The Politics and Ethics of Child Rearing in Contemporary China* and co-editor of the special issue "Moral (and other) laboratories" in the journal *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*. She designed and teaches the class "Ethics and the Human Experience" fairly regularly for UG and MA students.

A perennial problem in the ethical life of any person anywhere is other people, particularly those one counts as kin. Michael Peletz made this aspect of the human experience explicit with the term "kinship ambivalence," developed as a corrective to anthropology's preoccupation with the formal properties of kinship systems (2001). There is, of course, more to kinship than the reproduction of corporate groups. The problems of kinship relate not only to the many obligations one must negotiate and disappointments to be endured. There are also attachments to be managed and boundaries to be drawn. Drawing from observations of systemic family therapy in Chinese cities, I will argue that the problem of "boundaries" is both historical and universal. How closeness is spotlighted and problematized, in relation to what idioms, technologies, and purposes, will always be specific to the context in question. Focusing on a treatment modality that responds to adolescent distress by suggesting a teenager has taken too much responsibility for a parent's unhappiness, this presentation examines the tension between social imperatives on the one hand, and the human potential for affective merging on the other.

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!

