



The Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

presents a seminar

by

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on

Beyond *Shengnü* and *Loser Dogs*: Comparing Singlehood for Women in Three Great East Asian Cities

Friday, 26 October 2018

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 12 Humanities Building

New Asia College, CUHK

A light lunch will be served at 12:30 pm. First come first served.

The experience of being single in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Tokyo is remarkably similar. In all three places, marriage is the ideal life course for women even as increasing numbers of women do not marry into their thirties, forties and beyond. Women living in these three cities have unprecedented opportunities to obtain education and find work that provides a measure of economic independence. Most women in these three cities say that they would like to marry but are unable to find a suitable partner. But in Hong Kong, women feel that they need not marry and single women feel that they live full lives. In Tokyo, although single women struggle with marriage when they reach their early thirties – a deadline of sorts for marriage – they relax and learn to enjoy their lives as they age into their forties and beyond. In Shanghai, women have a hard time imagining lifetime singlehood and feel great pressure to marry. How can we understand these differences? The speaker argues that the usual focus on single women as solitary actors searching for a mate is misguided. As governments in these three societies have stepped back from direct intrusion into intimate spaces of family life, and as the institutions of education and work bend toward global capitalism's incorporation of women into white-collar and service-oriented work, the family serves as an important facilitator of intimate decision-making. The speaker discusses how families in the three societies support, encourage, as well as curb and discourage singlehood and how families' interventions shape the quality of single women's lives.

Lynne Nakano is Professor in the Department of Japanese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is author of the book, *Community Volunteers in Japan: Everyday Stories of Social Change* and is currently working on a book comparing the life strategies of single women living in Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME