

# Other Epistemologies Online Lecture Series 2.0

Semester Focus: Innovative Approaches to Gender and Genre: Literature and Women Studies



## No Nature, No Culture: Ethnography of Some Chinese Buddhist Contributions to Environmentalism

14:00-15:45 (CEST) / 20:00-21:45 (GMT+8), Thursday, 05 October 2023

The lecture will take place via Zoom. Please register here: <https://www.aoi.uzh.ch/registration>

**Online Lecture by Prof. Dr. Mayfair Yang, University of California, Santa Barbara**

This lecture examines some Chinese Buddhist practices in Wenzhou that may contribute to global environmental efforts through the dissolution of the Nature-Culture ontological opposition that launched modernity. Vegetarianism and providing animal shelters are built on a long Buddhist tradition of empathy and compassion for the suffering of sentient beings and tied in with notions of reincarnation into the Six Paths of beings. One to two millennia before Donna Haraway's call to recognize that "all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense," Buddhist reincarnation cosmology had already set up a trans-generational ethics of kinship across the boundaries between humans and animals, and between humans and divinities. "Releasing Life" (*fangsheng*) rituals represent another expression of compassion for other beings and species.

**Prof. Mayfair Yang** is Professor of EALCS (East Asian Languages & Cultural Studies) and Religious Studies Departments at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is a cultural anthropologist interested in the intertwined processes of religiosity, secularization, and state operations in modernity, post-colonial, and Communist conditions. With a five-year National Science Foundation research grant, she has conducted fieldwork in rural Wenzhou, China since 1991 on the revival of popular religion and their negotiations with state secularization. Her major publications include *Re-enchanting Modernity: Ritual Economy & Society in Wenzhou, China* (2020) and *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: the Art of Social Relationships in China* (1994).