SEX WORK, MEDIA NETWORKS AND TRANSPACIFIC HISTORIES OF AFFECT

A Talk by Lily Wong
Assistant Professor of Literature, American University

Thursday, April 11, 2019 | 4:00PM-5:30PM
Social Sciences Building (SOS) 250

The figure of the Chinese sex worker—who provokes both disdain and desire—has become a trope for both Asian American sexuality and Asian modernity. Lingering in the cultural imagination, sex workers link sexual and cultural marginality, and their tales clarify the boundaries of citizenship, nationalism, and internationalism. Based on her new book, Transpacific Attachments, Lily Wong, Assistant Professor of Literature at American University, will discuss the mobility and mobilization of the sex worker figure through transpacific media networks, stressing the intersectional politics of racial, sexual, and class structures. She focuses on the transpacific networks that reconfigure “Chineseness,” complicating a diasporic framework of cultural authenticity. While imaginations of a global community have long been mobilized through romantic, erotic, and gendered representations, Wong emphasizes the significant role sex work plays in the constant restructuring of social relations. “Chineseness,” the figure of the sex worker shows, is an affective product as much as an ethnic or cultural signifier.

This event is sponsored and organized by the USC Dept. of East Asian Languages & Cultures, East Asian Studies Center and Center for Transpacific Studies