

**Confucius Institute of Rutgers University (CIRU)  
Chinese Culture Seminar**

**“Conjugating Material Culture and Political Power:  
The Scholars’ Robe from Huang Zongxi to Jiang Yong in  
Early Modern China”**

Minghui Hu  
University of California, Santa Cruz

Monday, March 24, 12:00 noon  
Seminar Room, Confucius Institute of Rutgers University  
24 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ



Minghui Hu is a professor of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His main research interests include the history of early modern China, the history of science, and global history. He is the author of many articles and of the forthcoming book on *Cosmopolitan Confucians: The Passage to Modern Chinese Thought*. His next project will focus on how technical knowledge, mingled with statecraft and literati learning, was put to use as an extension of the Qing state power to specific localities in the first half of the nineteenth century.

**Abstract:** In his talk, Professor Hu will use the ritual debates on the configuration of the scholar’s robe (*shenyi* 深衣, literally “the long garment”) to examine the materiality of political power in eighteenth century China. The scholarly debates on the scholar’s robe provide important clues that permit us to begin to unravel the nature and scale of political coercion’s reliance on sumptuary regulations on the one hand and the agency of literati trying to pinpoint classical symbols on the other. Classicism and coercion should be viewed as opposite yet complementary forces providing the political and social hierarchies a certain balance. But the dynamic connection between these forces can sometimes assume surprising forms. This is precisely why we need to study the technical details and materiality of the scholar’s robes in order to reveal the Qing’s political thinking behind it.

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