



Comparative Asian Research Network

Department of Japanese Studies, CUHK

The Happiness Impasse: Exploring Middle-class Women's Pursuits of Marital Happiness in Urban China and Japan

Dr. Lynn SUN

10 March 2022 (Thursday): 14:00 – 15:00 pm

Online via ZOOM (The link will be sent to the registrants)

Registration: <https://bit.ly/32mIBfg> or



All are Welcome!

“Why on earth do we marry nowadays if not for a happier life?” For many “middle-class” young women living in Tokyo and Shanghai today on whom this talk is centered, they entered marriage anticipating that there exists something called “marital happiness”. However, what does this “marital happiness” actually mean? More curiously, when I tried to find out the answer during my two-year fieldwork, what I heard and observed were mostly marital *unhappiness*. Why did most of my informants enter wedlock expecting happiness, yet their narratives often reveal quite otherwise? This talk thus seeks, through an ethnographic lens, to capture the simultaneous aspiration and anxiety “marital happiness” casts upon its pursuers in Shanghai and Tokyo. Instead of asking what marital happiness is and offering yet another fixed definition or code of it as many other works have done, the primary question this talk addresses is: what does “marital happiness” *do*?

Dr. Lynn Sun recently received her Ph.D. in anthropology from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include psychological anthropology, anthropology of ethics, happiness, and intimate relationships in China and Japan. She is currently working on turning her doctoral research into a book manuscript while teaching courses on gender, intimacy, marriage and family at Centre for China Studies and the Department of Anthropology at CUHK.

Enquiries: Misaki Nagaoka (mnagaoka@cuhk.edu.hk)