The Festival Crowd
Ethnic Body Politics and Vernacular Media Practices in 'Minority' China

Dr Jenny Chio (Emory University)

5pm, Nov 2, 2016 (Wednesday) FAMES Rooms 8 & 9

Abstract  Every spring, national delegates from across China gather in Beijing for the annual “Two Sessions,” the meetings of the National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Congress. During these sessions, photographs of ethnic minority delegates dressed in their finest ethnic clothing circulate widely in the national and international press. To a large extent, such images are intended to authenticate national discourses of China’s “happy family” of 56 official ethnic groups, visibly claim unity between minority and majority, the periphery and center, and subsume ethnic differences in China within the mainstream. In this talk, I juxtapose these commonplace national images against locally produced videos of ethnic festivals and their crowds, where the ethnic minority is often the bodily majority. Such examples of contemporary...
vernacular media imagery, often made by local videographers, typically feature lengthy shots of the massed gatherings of people, dressed in their best festival clothing. My aim is to examine how ethnic minority bodies, individual and collective, are being imagined in the body politic of China and as body politics in China. To do so, I ask: Why are these crowd shots so commonplace in rural videos, and what do they suggest in terms of how these ethnic communities see and show themselves as a polity and as a public? How might the visual presence of a crowd of ethnic minority sameness in locally produced videos speak against, or at least alongside, state efforts that appear to reduce ethnic differences to a handful of ethnic delegates?

**Speaker**  Dr Jenny Chio, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Emory University, is a cultural anthropologist and ethnographic filmmaker whose work explores rural social transformations in China, with a critical focus on the politics of mobility, ethnic minority subjectivities, and vernacular media practices. In 2016-2017, she is a Fellow at the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies, University of Cologne (Germany). She is also Co-Editor of *Visual Anthropology Review*, the journal of the Society for Visual Anthropology. Dr. Chio received her PhD in sociocultural anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley in 2009, and from 2009-2012, she was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Technology, Sydney (Australia). Her publications include her 2014 monograph on ethnic tourism, rural migration, and the visuality of development (*A Landscape of Travel: The Work of Tourism in Rural Ethnic China*, University of Washington Press), as well as articles and chapters on cultural heritage, Chinese documentary film festivals, and visual research methods in anthropology. She also directed an award-winning ethnographic film on rural, ethnic tourism development (农家乐 *Peasant Family Happiness*, 2013, distributed by Berkeley Media), which has screened at festivals and universities in the USA, Europe, and China.