Simple Foods, Deep Thoughts: Food as a Medium for Philosophical Poems in Classical Chinese Forms

小食物，大道理：以食物為題材的舊體哲理詩

Talk will be in English

Ai-jen Wann
Lecturer, School of Languages and Cultures, Purdue University

Poems about food in traditional Chinese literature have drawn the attention of scholars in a wide range of fields. Aside from their literary value, food poems can also serve as evidence about Chinese food culture, provide insights for archaeological finds, and supplement information with regard to environmental changes in China’s diverse regions and historical periods. However, the convention of using foods, particularly simple foods, to convey philosophical notions, either explicit or implicit, has not been carefully researched. Often moralistic or satirical, simple-food poems are typically humorous, entertaining, and thought-provoking to explore. From The Book of Poetry to The Songs of Chu to Dream of the Red Chamber, this talk will select both celebrated and neglected poems about simple foods to show how items such as plums, oranges, stem lettuce, bamboo shoots, tofu, water-melon seeds, ginger, and crabs, serve as a) messengers of a poet’s philosophical principles; b) the remedy for a poet’s personal unfulfilled goals; c) ideas of a poet’s self-entertainment or mockery; and d) a means to critique mankind and society.

Stanley Coulter Hall G030
January 28th 4:30-5:45, Wednesday

--------------------------------------------

Chinese New Year: A Changing Tradition Seen Through Films and Popular Entertainment

Jinhua Li
Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Stanley Coulter Hall 239
February 19th 4:00-5:30, Thursday