Title: Biopolitics in Contemporary China: Garlic Chives and Involution

Abstract:
The economic success the PRC has enjoyed in the last three decades is hitting a bottleneck, and we are seeing ever intensifying internal competitions among the Chinese people simply to survive. This paper focuses on the wide popularity of the terms jiucai, garlic chives, and neijuan, involution, on China’s internet to investigate the cultural and political subjectivity of the ordinary Chinese citizens in a time of fierce competition and economic statism. The paper also updates Foucault’s theory of biopolitics by investigating the deeply intertwined relation between the biological, the economic, and the political in contemporary Chinese governmentality. While the post-socialist PRC has developed a sophisticated economic rationality to legitimize its state sovereignty, this economic sovereignty also strains the ordinary subjects so much that it begins to pose a serious challenge to this legitimacy.

Bio:
PANG Laikwan is Professor of Cultural Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is the author of several books, including, more recently, The Appearing Demos: Hong Kong During and After the Umbrella Movement (U of Michigan, 2021), The Art of Cloning: Creative Production During China’s Cultural Revolution (Verso, 2017), and Creativity and Its Discontents: China’s Creative Industries and Intellectual Property Rights Offenses (Duke UP, 2012). She will be a CASBS fellow at Stanford University in the academic year of 2021-2022.