

COLLOQUIUM BY DON SNOW

WRITTEN CANTONESE: WHAT IS IT, WHERE DID IT COME FROM, AND WHY?

TIME: 7-8PM, WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2015

VENUE: CC 1103

Speaker: Donald Snow, Director of Language and Writing Programs at Duke Kunshan University.

ABSTRACT:

It is often said that China has many different dialects but only one written language. However, this is not entirely true – Cantonese speakers have been reading, writing, and publishing texts in Cantonese for more than two centuries. This presentation addresses the following questions: What is written Cantonese and how does it relate to standard written Chinese? How did written Cantonese develop historically - who used it, where, and for what? Why has written Cantonese become more widely used than the written form of any other Chinese dialect? Why should we care about written Cantonese – or about the written form of any Chinese dialect?

BIO:

Don Snow holds a BA in History from the College of Wooster, an MA in English (TESOL) from Michigan State University, and a PhD in East Asian Languages and Cultures (Chinese Linguistics) from Indiana University. He has taught language, culture, and linguistics for over two decades in China, and is currently Director of Language and Writing Programs at Duke Kunshan University. In addition to his books and articles on language teaching, he does research on the history of social roles of languages, and has published journal articles on topics such as diglossia and written forms of East Asian vernaculars. A number of his articles examine the history of written Cantonese and his monograph *Cantonese as Written Language: The Growth of a Written Chinese Vernacular* was published by Hong Kong University Press in 2004.