Speaker: Miss Chen Yiyuan  
PhD Program  
Department of Applied Social Sciences  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Date:  8 November 2012 (Thur)  
Time:  12:00 nn – 1:30 pm  
Venue: GH405

Topic:  Capital flow to countryside: agrarian change and rice production in China

Abstract:

It has long been considered that small-scale family farming constitutes the very basis of China’s agricultural production. However, encouraged by the Chinese government, the rapid expansion of corporate agricultural production (农业产业化) has brought many questions on traditional small-scale family farming. For one thing, underlying such an expansion is the increase of capital flow to countryside (资本下乡). Some researchers advocate that the new mode of corporate agricultural production would bring many benefits to small producers as it promotes agricultural modernization and ensures food security. These scholars as well as some policy makers, however, have overlooked the impact of capital flow on the trajectory of agrarian change. This study casts serious doubt on such assumed benefits and instead calls for a deeper understanding of current Chinese agricultural activities on two fronts: the shifts and changes of actors involved in current agricultural production, and the mechanisms and impacts of corporate agricultural production chain.

Based on qualitative fieldwork in Hunan province, this research aims to examine the emergence and rapid expansion of capitalist, corporate agricultural production of rice in China’s rural area and how it interfaces with local social fabrics, bringing new modes of agrarian changes specifically in rice production, and new configuration of classes and ways for wealth accumulation.

Speaker's brief biography:

Miss Chen Yiyuan is currently a full-time PHD student in the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Huazhong University of Science and Technology, and a Master’s degree in Sociology (gerontology) from Renmin University of China. Her research interests include rural social differentiation, agrarian change and food security in China.