Co-opting the histories of “Chinese Living Overseas”?: Victims, Apologies and the PRC in Australia

11 April 2018 (Wednesday)
5:00 - 6:30 pm
B5308, 5/F, Yeung Kin Man Academic Building

Abstract
In recent years, the government of the People’s Republic of China is more forcefully and successfully presenting itself globally as the “defender of Chinese interests”. In so doing it conforms to orthodox views on the rights of nation-states to represent their citizens’ interests wherever they may be in the world. But, this position becomes more problematic when the “Chinese” being defended are a vague grouping that oftentimes includes people who are not currently or never were PRC citizens—instead they are defined by “blood” or “looks” through ancestry. This paper examines the way that narratives of national humiliation are mobilized in the execution of the PRC’s international diplomacy in the context of the myriad and lengthy histories of Chinese living overseas--specifically the history of Australian Chinese. In Australia, the PRC’s engagement with both “new migrants” and long-term Chinese overseas, conflates the distinct histories of these two groups and presents them as having equivalent shared status as victims of humiliating race-based discrimination by non-Chinese. My paper explores issues of the co-option of history, the mobilisation of victim narratives, and experiences of racial discrimination in the light of the PRC’s engagement with Chinese Overseas in Australia.

Biography
Louise Edwards is Scientia Professor in the School of Humanities and Languages. She publishes on women and gender in China and Asia from historical, cultural and political perspectives and teaches into the History and Asian Studies majors. Her most recent solo-authored books include Women Politics and Democracy: Women’s Suffrage in China (Stanford University Press 2008) and Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China (Cambridge University Press 2016).

*All are welcome*