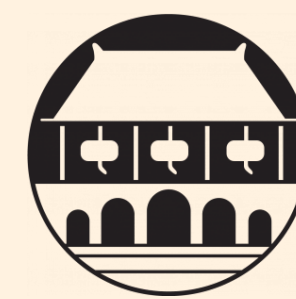




THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Public Policy and Global Affairs

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THE CENTRE FOR KOREAN RESEARCH,
THE CENTRE FOR JAPANESE RESEARCH,
AND THE CENTRE FOR CHINESE RESEARCH PROUDLY PRESENT

Composing Courtesy: Understanding Envoy Poetry in Early Modern East Asia

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2020

5PM-6PM (PDT)



Dr. Wiebke Denecke

- Dr. Wiebke Denecke is Visiting Professor of East Asian Literatures & Comparative Literature at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her research encompasses the literary and intellectual history of premodern China, Japan and Korea, comparative studies of East Asia and the premodern world, and world literature. She is the author of *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), *Classical World Literatures: Sino-Japanese and Greco-Roman Comparisons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), and co-editor of *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* (2012, 2018), *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), and a three-volume literary history of Japan from an East Asian perspective (*Nihon "bun"gakushi. A New History of Japanese "Literature"*) (2015-2019). She is the general editor of *The Hsu-Tang Library of Classical Chinese Literature* (OUP) and, with Satoru Hashimoto and Zhang Longxi, she edits the book series *East Asian Comparative Literature and Culture* (Brill). Denecke currently works on projects situating early Japanese literature in relationship to Korea and on comparative approaches to East Asia's Sinographic Sphere.

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- Diplomacy is a ubiquitous human practice of communities in contact. Today we associate it with governments and foreign service corps negotiating the interests of sovereign states and their citizens in the broader frame of international law. While diplomacy has been a core concern in political and international history, scholars have come to scrutinize it also from an anthropological perspective, as a common social and cultural practice. They highlight the role played by gift giving, ritual and public spectacle, oratorical performance and knowledge transmission. The emerging sub-field of “literary diplomatic studies” explores the relations of diplomacy to the literary sphere: diplomacy in any given time and place had its own culturally distinctive repertoire of language hierarchies, textual genres, rhetorical templates, literary tropes, and media and material forms, a topic which has yet to receive systematic comparative attention.
- This talk focuses on envoy poetry from early modern East Asia, in particular on *Collections of Magnificent Flowers* (*Hwanghwajip*), a large corpus of officially compiled poetry anthologies from the missions the Ming court sent to Chosŏn Korea between 1450 and 1633; and several 18th-century poetry collections from Korea’s *t’ongsinsa* missions to Japan.
- In cross-cultural perspective East Asia’s envoy poetry is a highly distinctive phenomenon: during their encounters envoys communicated in the *scripta* (rather than *lingua franca* of Literary Sinitic through “brush talk” on paper; they were Confucian literati eager to display their talent in collective poetry composition on set topics and shared rhyme schemes; and they learnt how to play with a common set of themes and tropes to convey courtesy and conviviality. How do the literary repertoires differ in Ming-Chosŏn and Chosŏn-Tokugawa envoy poetry collections and why? How did current events and evolving political constellations affect this rather formulaic poetry? Ultimately this lecture aims to understand the role of envoy poetry in the history of early modern East Asia and develop a comparative framework for understanding the phenomenon of envoy poetry in cross-cultural perspective.

