Research Output/Impact Prize for the Dean’s Research Fund 2016-17

Brief Introduction of Awardee’s
Research Publication/Study and Future Research Development

| Awardee (Dept): | Dr. Lee Siu Yau, Assistant Professor (APS) |
| Publication Title: | Surviving Online Censorship in China: Three Satirical Tactics and their Impact |

A. Briefly introduce your research publication/study for which you have received the prize.

This article explains how different satirical tactics can influence the outcomes of online activism. Through comparative case studies of three attempts to challenge the policies or malpractices of the Chinese state in 2009, it argues that online satirical campaigns are most likely to survive when activists adopt the tactic of “parodic satire,” whereby activists mimic a specific practice of the state and skilfully transplant it to other contexts. Since the language used by the activists resembles that of the powerful, the tactic allows netizens to exaggerate the internal contradictions of the policies or practices concerned without creating an easily identifiable symbol of resistance in the process. This tactic not only increases the cost to the state of censoring critical messages, but also restrains activists from extending their criticisms of the original subject to other areas. As a result it increases the chance for the activists to exert insistent pressure on the state.

This article represents the first attempt in the field of Chinese studies to theorize the relationship between satirical techniques and the outcomes of online activism.

B. How you used/will use your prize and perhaps its usefulness to your research development?

I am very thankful for the support from the Faculty. The prize provides me with the necessary resources to continue my research on immigration attitudes in Hong Kong—a new research agenda that I have developed since 2014. In the coming year I will conduct pilot studies on treatments that may modify individual attitudes towards immigrants from Mainland China, and discuss my findings in international conferences and workshops on experimental methods.

C. Expected research outcomes/outputs/impacts arising from this prize.
Tension between Hong Kong locals and immigrants from Mainland China has intensified in recent years. While most of the conflicts take place on the Internet are in the forms of hate speech and mockeries, they have gradually escalated into street protests and discriminatory practices. Unfortunately to date our understanding of the conflicts has remained very limited. My research will articulate the socio-psychological foundations of negative attitudes towards immigrants and thus be relevant to policy makers and students of intergroup conflicts. I expect that the research will generate at least one journal manuscript and research seminar.