

CGC Seminar on Researching Citizenship Education in China - New Directions and New Thinking

Date: 21st June 2011 (Tuesday)

Time: 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The Concept of Citizenship in Confucian Heritage Societies: Historical and Comparative Perspectives

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In the Western world, the concept of citizenship is rooted in the Mediterranean tradition, with emphasis on citizens' innate rights and responsibilities (Edwards, 2004). These normative ideas of citizens and citizenship have had a profound influence on Western societies, though these early ideas were developed in diverse ways in later history. The East Asian tradition, especially the Confucian tradition, has developed them in quite different ways. Early Confucians have devoted considerable attention to communitarian and political responsibilities of *shi* (intellectuals) and *min* (common people), the terms for *citizens* within a traditional Chinese polity and society. In the Confucian view, *shi* and *min* are the foundations of a sociopolitical community for which their responsibilities are prescribed: "everybody has an obligation for the well-being under Heaven" (Gu, Rizhi Lu, 13).

This presentation will examine how the concept of citizenship has emerged and developed in the Chinese context, tracing its historical roots and metamorphoses. It will also clarify some key terms about citizens and citizenship, e.g., *gongmin* and *simin*, *shimin* and *cunmin*, and compare how the Chinese discourse may differ from that in the Western contexts. Supported by empirical data collected from relevant projects, it will further reflect on modern implications of the Chinese discourse for citizenship education, and serve the cultural dialogue among civilizations for the making of glocal citizens.