Stanford



Haiyan Lee

Walter A. Haas Professor of the Humanities and Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures and of Comparative Literature

Bio

BIO

Before coming to Stanford in 2009, Haiyan Lee taught at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the University of Hong Kong, and held post-doctoral fellowships at Cornell University and Harvard University. Her first book, _Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950_, is a critical genealogy of the idea of “love” (qing) in modern Chinese literary and cultural history. It was awarded the 2009 Joseph Levenson Prize from the Association for Asian Studies for the best English-language book on post-1900 China. It is the first recipient of this prize in the field of modern Chinese literature. Her second book, _The Stranger and the Chinese Moral Imagination_, examines how the figure of “the stranger”—foreigner, migrant, class enemy, woman, animal, ghost—in Chinese fiction, film, television, and exhibition culture tests the moral limits of a society known for the primacy of consanguinity and familiarity. Her third book, _A Certain Justice: Toward an Ecology of the Chinese Legal Imagination_ investigates Chinese visions of “justice” at the intersection of narrative, law, and ethics. She is working on a new project on animism, cognition, and the Chinese cosmographic imagination.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Professor, East Asian Languages and Cultures
- Professor, Comparative Literature

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Chair and Vice Chair, Breadth Governance Board, VPUE, (2024-2026)
- Chair, East Asian Languages and Cultures, (2020-2026)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Violet Andrews Whittier Fellowship, Stanford Humanities Center (2026-2027)
- Biennial Book Prize, Honorable Mention, International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH) (2024)
- Humanities Seed Grant, Stanford School of Humanities and Sciences (2023-2025)
- Bass Fellowship in Undergraduate Education, Stanford University (2022-2027)
- Ellen Andrews Wright Fellowship, Stanford Humanities Center (2019-2020)
- Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship, American Council of Learned Societies (2015-2016)
- Residential fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (2015-2016)
- Joseph Levenson Book Prize, The Association for Asian Studies (2009)
- An Wang Postdoctoral Fellowship, John K. Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University (2006-2007)
- Eugene M. Kayden Manuscript Prize, University of Colorado (2005)

- Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in comparative literature, Cornell Society for the Humanities (2002-2003)
- Committee on Scholarly Communication with China (CSCC) Graduate Fellowship, American Council of Learned Societies (1998-1999)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Member of the TC Cognitive and Affect Studies Forum Executive Committee, Modern Language Association of America (2024 - present)
- Member of the Annual Meeting Program Committee, Modern Language Association of America (2018 - 2021)
- Elected member of the Modern and Contemporary Chinese LLC Forum Executive Committee, Modern Language Association of America (2017 - 2022)
- Editorial board member and associate editor, Journal of Asian Studies (2012 - 2015)
- Elected member of the China and Inner Asia Council, Association for Asian Studies (2012 - 2015)
- Editorial board member, Journal of Posthumanism, Modern China, Journal of World Literature, Chinese Literature Today (2010 - present)
- Consultant and jury coordinator of the inaugural Newman Prize for Chinese Literature, World Literature Today and the Institute for US-China Issues, University of Oklahoma (2008 - 2009)
- Member of the Annual Meeting Program Committee, Association for Asian Studies (2007 - 2009)

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS

- Center for East Asian Studies
- Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- Modern Thought and Literature
- Philosophy and Literature

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- B.A., Peking University , Philosophy and Religious Studies (1990)
- M.A., University of Chicago , East Asian Languages and Civilizations (1994)
- Ph.D., Cornell University , East Asian Literature (2002)

LINKS

- Distinguished Lecture "A Murder in Manchuria": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfo-3_4yxEA&t=4s
- Keynote: "From Here to Eternity: A Sino-Jewish Encounter": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRJGrmLC9Ug
- Blog: "The Longest Transitional Justice: An Immigrant Scholar Defends Affirmative Action": https://shc.stanford.edu/arcade/interventions/longest-transitional-justice-immigrant-scholar-defends-affirmative-action
- Interview: "Why Chinese Spies Don’t Fall in Love": https://shc.stanford.edu/stanford-humanities-center/news/why-chinese-spies-dont-fall-love
- Interview: "Detective stories don’t sell in China. The reason why has to do with Chinese concepts of justice": https://humsci.stanford.edu/feature/detective-stories-dont-sell-china-reason-why-has-do-chinese-concepts-justice
- Interview: "What Is Philosophy to Me?": https://celineleboeuf.substack.com/p/haiyan-lee
- Academia.edu: https://stanford.academia.edu/hlee

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Research interests: Modern Chinese literature and popular culture; literature's intersections with philosophy, law, anthropology, and religion; cognitive literary studies; affect studies; the nonhuman and environmental humanities

My latest book, titled "A Certain Justice: Toward an Ecology of the Chinese Legal Imagination," is the first book-length study of the Chinese legal imagination pivoted on the idea of justice as a juridical, ethical, aesthetic, ecological, and cosmological concept. See https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/C/bo192888789.html

BOOK ABSTRACT:

China has an image as a realm of Oriental despotism where law is at best window-dressing and at worst an instrument of coercion and tyranny. The rule of law seems an elusive ideal in the face of entrenched obstacles baked, as it were, into China's cultural and political DNA. In this highly original contribution to the interdisciplinary field of law and humanities, Haiyan Lee contends that this image arises from an ahistorical understanding of China's political-legal culture, particularly the failure to distinguish what she calls high justice and low justice.

In the Chinese legal imagination, Lee shows, justice is a vertical concept, with low justice between individuals firmly subordinated to the high justice of the state. Lee's book uses high and low justice as the organizing concepts to make sense of a political-legal culture that is marked by a mistrust of law's ability to deliver justice and a privileging of substantive over procedural justice. Lee illustrates the hierarchy of high and low justice with an array of justice narratives, from spy thrillers that enchant the state to tales of not playing fair, from reformation of war criminals to mice suing cats in underworld courts.

By bringing stories about crime and punishment, subterfuge and exposé, guilt and redemption from a non-liberal tradition into conversation with moral, political, and legal philosophy, A Certain Justice helps us recognize the fight for justice outside the familiar arenas of liberal democracy and in terms other than those furnished by the rule of law.

Teaching

COURSES

2025-26

- For Love of Country: National Narratives in Chinese Literature and Film: CHINA 279, CHINA 379 (Win)
- Sex, Gender, and Power in Modern China: CHINA 115, CHINA 215, FEMGEN 150, FEMGEN 250 (Aut)
- The Novel: COMPLIT 123 (Spr)

2024-25

- Proseminar in East Asian Humanities III: Theories and Paradigms: EALC 203 (Spr)
- Survey in Sinophone Literature: CHINA 380 (Win)
- Where the Wild Things Are: The Ecology and Ethics of Conserving Megafauna: BIO 185, DLCL 170, EALC 170, EARTHSYS 170, GLOBAL 170 (Win)

2023-24

- The Cult of Happiness: Pursuing the Good Life in America and China: CHINA 10SC, COMPLIT 10SC (Sum)
- The Novel: COMPLIT 123 (Spr)
- Where the Wild Things Are: The Ecology and Ethics of Conserving Megafauna: BIO 185, DLCL 170, EALC 170, EARTHSYS 170, GLOBAL 170 (Win)
- Why College? Your Education and the Good Life: COLLEGE 101 (Aut)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)

Yan Chang, Mayshu (Meixu) Zhan

Doctoral Dissertation Co-Advisor (AC)

Shuwen Yang

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (NonAC)

Luo Jia

Doctoral (Program)

Michael Baiamonte, Alan Huang, Yue Wu

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **A Certain Justice: Toward an Ecology of the Chinese Legal Imagination**
  Lee, H.
  University of Chicago Press.2023
- **The Stranger and the Chinese Moral Imagination**
  Lee, H.
  Stanford University Press.2014
- **Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950**
  Lee, H.
  Stanford University Press.2007
- **Sentiment, Reason, and Law: Policing in the Republic of China on Taiwan (Book Review)** *JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES*
  Book Review Authored by: Lee, H.
  2025; 84 (2): 539-542
- **Pardon and Forgiveness** *Elgar Concise Encyclopedia of Law and Literature*
  Lee, H.
  Edward Elgar Publishing.2025: 344-347
- **Into One's Own Hands: The Shape of Justice in China's Rust Belt** *Law and Literature*
  Lee, H.
  2025; 37 (2): 225-246
- **Love or Lust Redux: On the Pure Relationship in Chinese Literature** *Gender and Friendship in Chinese Literature*
  Lee, H.
  Brill.2024: 268–308
- **The Longest Transitional Justice: An Immigrant Scholar Defends Affirmative Action**
  Lee, H.
  Arcade: Humanities in the World. Stanford Humanities Center.
  2023
- **The Importance of Not Being Honest** *Law and Literature*
  Lee, H.
  2023; 35 (2): 201-220
- **Apples and Oranges? An Idiosyncratic Comparison of Literature and Anthropology** *Dibur Literary Journal*
  Lee, H.
  2022: 107-119
- **Utopian Ruins: A Memorial Museum of the Mao Era (Book Review)** *JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES*
  Book Review Authored by: Lee, H.
  2021; 80 (4): 1069-1070

- **How Things Count as the Same: Memory, Mimesis, and Metaphor. (Book Review)** *CRITICAL INQUIRY*
  Book Review Authored by: Lee, H.
  2021; 47 (2): 416
- **Commentary on "Overnight Urbanization and Changing Spirits Disturbed Ecosystems in Southern Jiangsu" by Robert Weller and Keping Wu**
  Lee, H.
  Current Anthropology.
  2021 ; 62 (5):
- **Latour, Tiananmen, and Glass Slippers; or, What We Talk about When We Talk about Chinese Studies** *PRISM-THEORY AND MODERN CHINESE LITERATURE*
  Lee, H.
  2020; 17 (2): 457-474
- **"Measuring the Stomach of a Gentleman with the Heart-Mind of a Pipsqueak": On the Ubiquity and Utility of Theory of Mind in Literature, Mostly** *POETICS TODAY*
  Lee, H.
  2020; 41 (2): 205–22
- **Déjà Vu: Revisiting Hu Fayun's SARS Novel during the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic**
  Lee, H.
  MCLC Resource Center Publication. Ohio State University.
  2020
- **A Sino-Jewish Encounter, A Humanitarian Fantasy** *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*
  Lee, H.
  2020; 6 (1): 142-167
- **When Nothing Is True, Everything Is Possible: On Truth and Power by Way of Socialist Realism** *PMLA-PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA*
  Lee, H.
  2019; 134 (5): 1157–64
- **The Silence of Animals: Writing on the Edge of Anthropomorphism in Contemporary Chinese Literature** *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*
  Lee, H.
  2019; 26 (1): 145-164
- **Class Feeling** *AFTERLIVES OF CHINESE COMMUNISM: POLITICAL CONCEPTS FROM MAO TO XI*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Sorace, C., Franceschini, Loubere, N.
  2019: 23-+
- **The Lives and Troubles of Others** *Mouse v. Cat in Chinese Literature*
  Idema, W. L.
  University of Washington Press.2019: vii-xiv
- **Through Thick and Thin: The Romance of the Species in the Anthropocene** *International Communication of Chinese Culture*
  Lee, H.
  2018; 5 (1-2): 145-172
- **Review of The Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China: From Dreamscapes to Theatricality by Ling Hon Lam (Columbia University Press, 2018)**
  Lee, H.
  Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Resource Center.
  2018
- **Charlie Chan and the Orientalist Exception** *ASIA-PACIFIC JOURNAL-JAPAN FOCUS*
  Lee, H.

2017; 15 (4)

- **Revolution and Love** *A New Literary History of Modern China*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Wang, D.
  Harvard University Press.2017: 231–236
- **Monsters to Die For: On Monster Hunt as a Ecological Fable**
  Lee, H.
  Association for Chinese Animation Studies. Hong Kong.
  2017
- **Review of _The Age of Irreverence: A New History of Laughter in China_ by Christopher Rea (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015)**
  Lee, H.
  Chinese Literature Today. University of Oklahoma.
  2017
- **How the Chinese Fell in Love with Love, Caveats and All: Review of _When True Love Came to China_ By Lynn Pan (Hong Kong University Press, 2015)**
  Lee, H.
  MCLC Resource Center. Ohio State University.
  2017
- **The Rise and Fall (and Rise again) of Vernacular Happiness** *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese*
  Lee, H.
  2017; 14 (1): 89-122
- **The Soft Power of the Constant Soldier; or, Why We Should Stop Worrying and Learn to Love the PLA** *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Wang, B.
  Duke University Press.2017: 237–266
- **Mao's Two Bodies: On the Curious (Political) Art of Impersonating the Great Helmsman** *Red Legacies in China: Cultural Afterlives of the Communist Revolution*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Li, J., Zhang, E.
  Harvard University Asia Center Publications.2016
- **'Two Wongs Can Make It White': Charlie Chan and the Orientalist Exception.** *Transnational Asia*
  Lee, H.
  2016; 1 (1)
- **Chinese Paw-litics, Anyone?**
  Lee, H.
  China Policy Institute, University of Nottingham.
  2016
- **Guns, Fairy Tales, and Red Guards**
  Lee, H.
  Parlio.com.
  2016
- **Chinese Feelings: Notes on a Ritual Theory of Emotion** *The Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture*
  Lee, H.
  2016; 9 (2): 1-37
- **Review of _Literature the People Love: Reading Chinese Texts from the Early Maoist Period (1949-1966)_ by Krista Van Fleit Hang (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013)**

Lee, H.
Journal of Asian Studies.
2015

- **Figuring History and Horror in a Provincial Museum: The Water Dungeon, the Rent Collection Courtyard, and the Socialist Undead** *The Challenge of Linear Time: Nationhood and the Politics of History in East Asia*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Murthy, V., Schneider, A.
  Brill.2014: 215–254
- **Woman, Sacrifice, and the Limits of Sympathy** *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China*
  Lee, H.
  2012; 6 (2): 184-197
- **The Ruins of Yuanmingyuan; Or, How to Enjoy a National Wound** *Places of Memory in Modern China: History, Politics, and Identity*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Matten, M. A.
  Brill.2012: 193–232
- **The Charisma of Power and the Military Sublime in Tiananmen Square** *JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES*
  Lee, H.
  2011; 70 (2): 397-424
- **From the Iron Rice Bowl to the Beggar's Bowl: What Good Is (Chinese) Literature?** *TELOS*
  Lee, H.
  2010: 129-149
- **Enemy under My Skin: Eileen Chang's Lust, Caution and the Politics of Transcendence** *PMLA-PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA*
  Lee, H.
  2010; 125 (3): 640-?
- **Nowhere in the World does There Exist Love or Hatred without Reason** *Words and Their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Wang, B.
  Brill.2010: 149–170
- **The Ruins of Yuanmingyuan Or, How to Enjoy a National Wound** *MODERN CHINA*
  Lee, H.
  2009; 35 (2): 155-190
- **Brought to You by the People's Republic of The Onion** *China Beat*
  Lee, H.
  2009
- **It's Right to Party, en Masse** *China in 2008: A Year of Great Significance*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Merkel-Hess, K., Pomeranz, K., Wasserstrom, J.
  Rowman and Littlefield.2009: 173–177
- **Kung Fu Panda, Go Home!** *China in 2008: A Year of Great Significance*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Merkel-Hess, K., Pomeranz, K., Wasserstrom, J.
  Rowman and Littlefield.2009: 241–245
- **Mo Yan, Inaugural Newman Laureate, Honored in Oklahoma** *China Beat*
  Lee, H.
  2009

- **Painted Skin: To Scare or Not to Scare?** *China Beat*
  Lee, H.
  2008
- **The Right to Party, en Masse.** *China Beat*
  Lee, H.
  2008
- **Meng Jiang Nü and the May Fourth Folklore Movement** *Meng Jiangnu Brings down the Great Wall: Ten Versions of a Chinese Legend*
  Lee, H.
  University of Washington Press.2008: 24–41
- **Taking It to Heart: Emotion, Modernity, Asia** *Positions: asia critique*
  Lee, H.
  2008; 16 (2)
- **The Lord of the Wolves?** *China Beat*
  Lee, H.
  2008
- **Kung Fu Panda, Go Home!** *China Beat*
  Lee, H.
  2008
- **The Right to Party, en Masse.** *China Beat*
  Lee, H.
  2008
- **The Other Chinese: Romancing the Folk in May Fourth Native Soil Fiction** *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies*
  Lee, H.
  2007; 33 (2): 9-34
- **Review of _The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making_ by Lydia H. Liu (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004)**
  Lee, H.
  The China Journal.
  2007
- **Eileen Chang's Poetics of the Social: Review of _Love in a Fallen City_ By Eileen Chang (New York Review of Books Classics, 2006)**
  Lee, H.
  2007
- **Review of _China on Screen: Cinema and Nation_ by Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)**
  Lee, H.
  Nations and Nationalism.
  2007
- **'A Dime Store of Words': The Liberty Magazine and the Cultural Logic of the Popular Press** *Twentieth-Century China*
  Lee, H.
  2007; 33 (1): 53-80
- **Nannies for foreigners: The enchantment of Chinese womanhood in the age of millennial capitalism** *Workshop on the Art and Politics of East Asia*
  Lee, H.
  DUKE UNIV PRESS.2006: 507–29
- **Governmentality and the aesthetic state: A Chinese fantasia** *Symposium on Problem of Public Intellectuals*
  Lee, H.
  DUKE UNIV PRESS.2006: 99–129

- **The Book and the Sword: China and the U.S. in the Global Classroom** *Teaching China in the American Classroom: Personal Reflections of Chinese Scholars in the U.S.*
  Lee, H.
  edited by Ban, W., Xueping, Z.
  Nanjing University Press.2006
- **From Abroad, with Love: Transnational Texts, Local Critiques** *Tamkang Review*
  Lee, H.
  2006; 36 (4): 185-225
- **Tears that crumbled the great wall: The archaeology of feeling in the may fourth folklore movement** *Annual Meeting of the Assoication-for-Asian-Studies*
  Lee, H. Y.
  CAMBRIDGE UNIV PRESS.2005: 35–65
- **Review of _Revolution Plus Love: Literary History, Women's Bodies, and Thematic Repetition in Twentieth-Century Chinese Fiction_ by Jianmei Liu (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003)**
  Lee, H.
  2005
- **Sympathy, Hypocrisy, and the Trauma of Chineseness** *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*
  Lee, H.
  2004; 16 (2): 76-122
- **Review of _Holding Up Half the Sky: Chinese Women Past, Present, and Future_ ed. by Tao Jie, Zheng Bijun & Shirley L. Mow (New York: The Feminist Press, 2004)**
  Lee, H.
  Journal of the American Oriental Society.
  2004
- **All the feelings that are fit to print - The community of sentiment and the literary public sphere in China, 1900-1918** *50th Annual Meeting of the Association-for-Asian-Studies*
  LEE, H.
  SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC.2001: 291–327
- **Love or Lust? The Sentimental Self in Honglou meng** *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*
  Lee, H.
  1997; 19: 58-111