

Department of
East Asian Languages
and Literatures

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

The Chinese Program at the George Washington University

乔治华盛顿大学 东亚语言文学系 中文部
喬治華盛頓大學 東亞語言文學系 中文部



Chinese Program Research Showcase 2026

Friday, April 17th, 2026 2:00-4:30pm 1957 E St., Rm 214

2:00 PM – Opening Remarks by Professor Immanuel Kim, EALL Dept. Chair

2:10-4:10 PM– Presentations

4:10-4:30 PM – Award ceremony & Reception

2:10 pm Camryn Yi 易爱琼

An Exploration of Wen Tong's Use of Traditional Chinese Medicine in His Poetry

Moderator: Sam Asimos

Abstract:

Wen Tong (文同, 1019-1079) is a Northern Song Dynasty poet and painter well known for his bamboo paintings. However, although there are many scholarships focused on his paintings, Wen as a poet and his poetry is underexplored. With only one poetry anthology book in Chinese and one book focused on his poetry in English, there is a large knowledge gap centered on his poetry. His poetry covers many different subjects, but the majority featured nature. His deep admiration of nature was expressed in his poetry and combined with his love of paintings, created poetry that could paint a vivid picture in the readers' mind. Within his poetry, there are several poems featuring Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in a descriptive view. Two of them are *Sending He Shouwu Pills to My Friend* and *The Old Man of the Eastern Hill*. *Sending He Shouwu Pills to My Friend* focuses on the herb *He Shouwu* (何首乌) with him giving a vivid description on the herb's preparation and effects. While *The Old Man of the Eastern Hill* is about his conversation

with an old man who used the TCM technique *Qigong* (气功) to slow down his aging and gain vitality in his old age. In both poems, he uses strong imagery to showcase the effects of *He Shouwu* and *Qigong*.

This study contributes to the study of Wen's poetry and to fill in the research gap centered around his poetry and presentation of TCM, specifically through both a literary and scientific lens. It focuses on his usage of TCM in both *Sending He Shouwu Pills to My Friend* and *The Old Man of the Eastern Hill* through the presentation of detailed imagery and connects it to current modern TCM empirical research.

Through close-readings of both poems, analysis of English scholarships (academic articles, scientific papers and books) and Chinese scholarships (academic articles and an anthology book) centered on him and TCM (*He Shouwu* and *Qigong*) and a visual drawing based on his description of preparing *He Shouwu* were together used to create a connection between his detailed imagery of the preparation and effects of *He Shouwu* and the effects of *Qigong* to current modern empirical studies. His poetic imagery of *He Shouwu* and *Qigong* was accurate to these studies and demonstrated his deep understanding of TCM. Overall this study adds to the few studies on Wen and his poetry, and works to fill an underexplored area of his TCM poetry. While also hoping to inspire other sinologists into conducting more research focused on Wen Tong as a poet rather than a painter.

2:40 pm Catriona Mitchell 宋琳

**Qing Dynasty Women's Poetry as Inspiration for *Dream of the Red Chamber's*
Crab-flower Club**

Moderator: Leah Hamaker

Abstract:

During the Qing dynasty, thousands of women published poetry, and numerous anthologies were dedicated exclusively to women's poetry. The poetic devices and themes explored by the female literati of the Qing Dynasty are reflected in the poetry of Cao Xueqin's novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Historical examples of women's poetry societies are also reflected by the two iterations of poetry societies in the novel: The initial Crab-flower club and later revival as the Peach-flower club. Despite the proliferation of women's writing during Cao Xueqin's lifetime, there was still an ongoing debate about women's suitability as writers, with Zhang Xuecheng and Yuan Mei showcasing different ends of this spectrum. The rhetoric in *Dream of the Red Chamber* makes clear that Cao Xueqin aligned himself with Yuan Mei's viewpoints, both regarding women's writing and with respect to Yuan Mei's 'nature and inspiration' poetic theory.

3:10 pm Ziyuan Zhang 张子渊

From Animality to Humanity: Confucian Ethics and the Literary Humanization of Fox Spirits in *Liaozhai Zhiyi*

Moderator: Xiao Ruyun

Abstract:

This presentation examines how Confucian ethical thought reshaped the literary representation of fox spirits in Chinese literature. While fox spirits originate in Chinese folk religion and cultural imagination, I argue that their portrayal in literature gradually became more humanized under the influence of Confucian moral discourse.

This transformation reaches a particularly concentrated form in Pu Songling's *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, where fox spirits are no longer merely supernatural omens or threatening demons, but become emotionally complex characters whose behaviors and relationships are intelligible within a Confucian ethical framework.

3:40 pm Jake Messick 马俊伟

The Question of 'Oversimplification': Assessing the Statistical Case Against the Second Round of Simplified Chinese Characters

Moderator: Eden Sharp

Abstract:

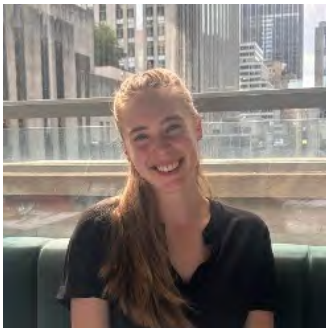
China's script simplification efforts have been met with much discourse throughout the decades since their promulgation in the 1950s, but one aspect that often gets overlooked is the attempted further revisions made in the late 1970s, better known as the "second round of simplification". While previous research concentrated on the first table used in public texts, this research seeks to analyze the simplifications that were published but went unused—those present in Table 2. Subsequently, the goal of this paper is to determine key statistical characteristics of the entire script reform, as well as determine a boundary for what constitutes "oversimplified" from a quantitative perspective. This study builds off of the work from my previous undergraduate thesis at the George Washington University, and develops off of the statistical measures employed in that research to analyze the 680 simplifications untouched in that investigation. First, simplification methodologies, stroke counts and other important variables were compiled across the Table 2 simplifications mirroring the aforementioned study's methodology, with some revisions made to correct for small errors. Then, measures of spread (median, max/min, mode, etc.) alongside counting totals for simplification type were calculated for both Table 2 and the combined set of both tables together, such as to compare results between tables and assess the scheme as a whole. Finally, a few helpful visualizations of the data were created, in order to display key trends discovered in the course of this research.

About the Presenters



Camryn Yi 易爱琼

Camryn Yi is a fourth year student (graduating in 2027) double majoring in Chinese Language and Literature and Biological Science on the pre-veterinary track. Camryn is extremely passionate about both of her majors and it is reflected in her thesis and presentation. Her presentation focuses on an interdisciplinary study of investigating Wen Tong's Traditional Chinese Medicine poetry and his strong imagery describing its effects, properties and preparations and connecting it to empirical biological research. After graduation, Camryn plans on continuing her studies in Chinese before applying to veterinary school. She hopes to attend GWU Chinese masters program after graduating from undergrad and then later attend veterinary school in 2030. After all her schooling is finished, she wishes to open her own bilingual veterinary clinic where she can offer a variety of services including holistic treatments to her clients. Outside of her academics, Camryn enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading romance books, writing stories and watching horror movies. She is also a part of GWU animal organization Paws for a Cause executive board, volunteers for GWU Red Cross club and is a sister of the Alpha Beta Chapter of Kappa Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc. and serves as the community service and philanthropy chair.



Catriona Mitchell 宋琳

Catriona Mitchell is a Chinese Language & Culture master's candidate at George Washington University with a focus on Chinese literature. Prior to her studies at GW, Catriona obtained her MSE in Data Science at Johns Hopkins University. Catriona currently works as a research analyst at the Institute for Defense Analyses in Alexandria, VA.



Ziyuan Zhang 张子渊

Ziyuan Zhang is currently a master's student in Chinese literature at George Washington University, with research interests covering classical Chinese novels, supernatural literature, and contemporary online literature. She has long been concerned with the narrative tradition of supernatural images in Chinese literature, as well as the cultural transformation of these "alien" images in different historical periods. Meanwhile, as a creator of online literature, she often understands literary works from an author's perspective and considers how narrative shapes characters and ethical concepts. Her current master's thesis focuses on the image of the fox spirit in *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, exploring the transformation of fox spirits from "animalistic" to "human" and how Confucian ethics influence the literary expression of these images.



Jake Messick 马俊伟

Jake Messick, B.S. (The George Washington University, Class of 2023), is a staff member in Research Technology Services within GW IT and a Master's candidate in the Chinese Language and Culture program within CCAS, graduating Spring 2027. With a past history in both mathematics and linguistics, he is interested in continuing to research the Chinese language from those angles, in particular Chinese orthography and the history of Chinese script. His undergraduate thesis, also on the second round of simplified Chinese characters, was presented at the 36th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics at Pomona College in 2024, and is set for publication later in the proceedings later this summer. Outside of academics, he enjoys baseball, cooking and international cultures.