



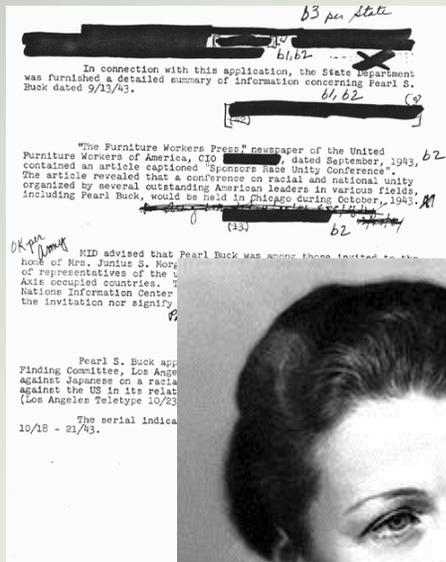
Date & time: Monday, 8 May 2017; 4:30p.m.

Venue: OEM1008, 10/F, OEN Hall Building, Ho Sin Hang Campus

Pearl S. Buck's FBI File, 1938-1955

Stuart Christie

Abstract: Drawing from previously unpublished materials, I argue that prior to and following the Second World War case agents at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) engaged in literary-minded interpretive practices which subsequently became a commonplace of the American surveillance state. Interpretive communities of authority, backed by emerging technologies, sought to create near evidentiary “realities” out of what were merely literary tastes and ideological propensities. As privileged readers who constructed their own canons out of published materials, deemed acceptable or unacceptable, FBI case managers “close-read” literary materials for evidence of political subversion. Buoyed by the ad hoc submission of data delivered along networks of enthusiastic volunteer informants nationwide, such interpretive communities, formal and informal, imposed strikingly narrow (statist) regimes of literary preference. At the same time, officials at the FBI enforced modes of censorship over and against views deemed subversive in the mainstream culture. The Bureau thus alternated between the selective suppression of information revealed as a consequence of investigation and its opportune release when delivering classified, confidential, or otherwise inaccessible information to the public for the purposes of securing indictments in congressional subcommittees. The FBI archive was purpose-built to serve preferred regimes of interpretation—even, or especially, prior to the moment of lawful investigation.



About the speaker:

Stuart Christie is Head and Professor of the Department of English Language and Literature at Hong Kong Baptist University. He is the author of *Worlding Forster: The Passage from Pastoral* (Routledge, 2005; paperback ed., 2013), *Plural Sovereignties and Contemporary Indigenous Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), and the co-editor, along with Zhang Yuejun, of *Modern American Poetry and the Chinese Encounter* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). He has published over fifty refereed outputs in venues such as *Modern Fiction Studies*, *College Literature*, *PMLA*, *Foreign Literature Studies* (外國文學研究), *The American Indian Quarterly*, and *Modernism/modernity* Print+. During 2016-2019, he is serving as the Editor-in-Chief of *Literature Compass*, an on-line consortium of literary scholarship published under the Wiley (Oxford) imprint, which produces quality, peer-reviewed articles across diverse subfields from scholars around the world.