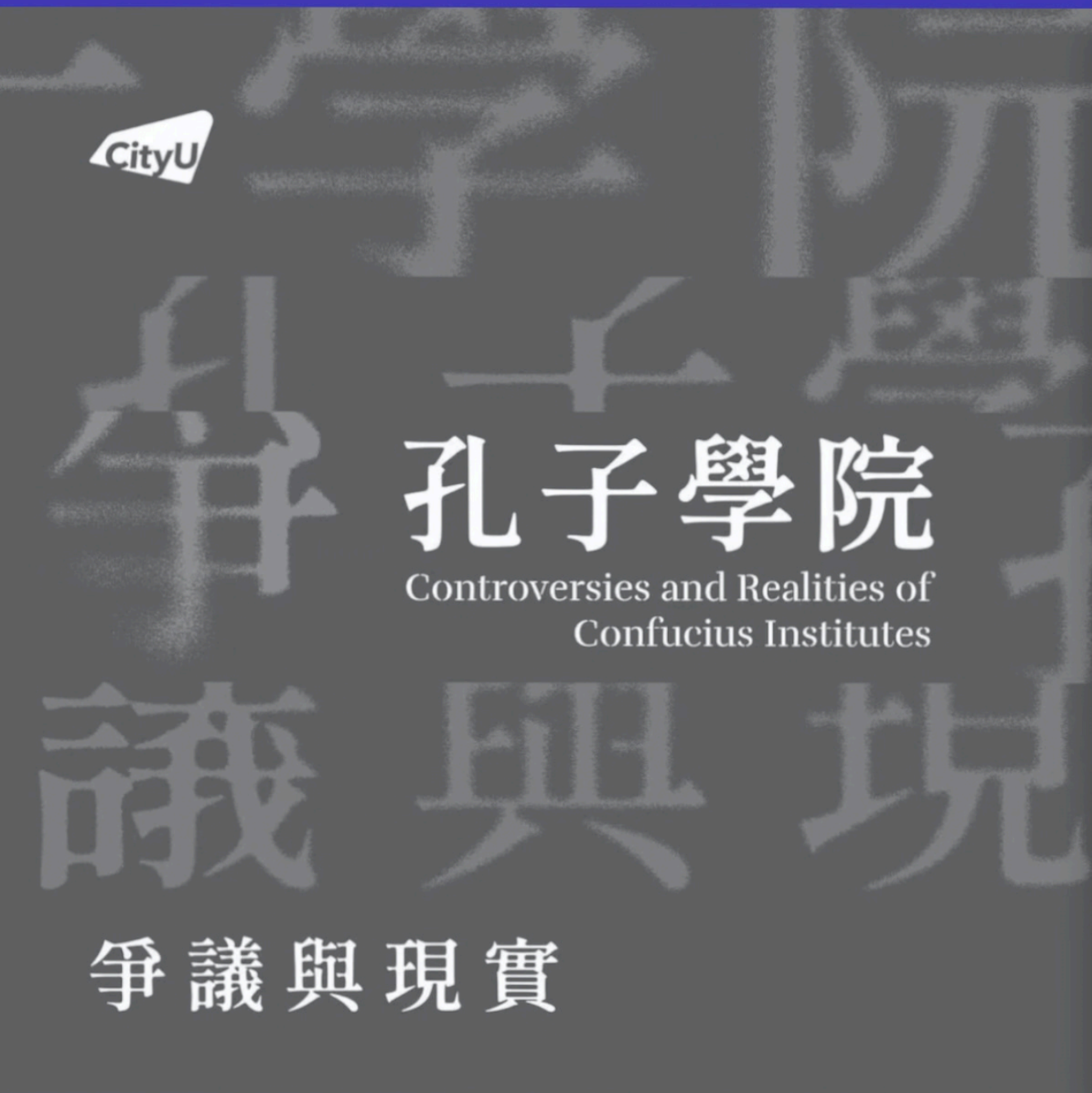


The Untold Realities of Confucius Institutes: China's Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, and Global Engagement



Memoirs of a Confucius Institute Director, Volume 1

Challenges, Controversies, and Realities

Jinghan Zeng



Open Lecture

14 April, 2026 (Tue)

11:00am-12:50pm

CPD 3.28 HKU

All are welcome.



前院長視角掀露一項
最具爭議的海外交流實驗

曾敬涵

Guest Speaker Prof. Jinghan ZENG

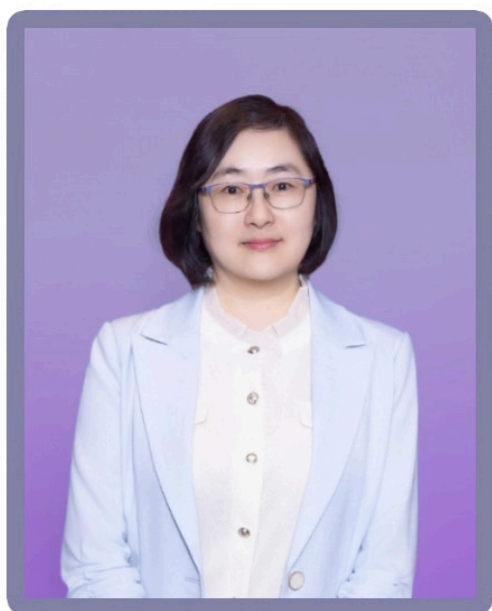
Register here:



Jinghan Zeng is a Professor at the Department of Public and International Affairs, City University of Hong Kong. His current research agenda centres on the “3Is”: Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and Confucius Institutes (CI). He is the author *Artificial Intelligence with Chinese Characteristics* (2022), *Slogan Politics: Understanding Chinese Foreign Policy Concepts* (2020), and *The Chinese Communist Party's Capacity to Rule: Ideology, Legitimacy and Party Cohesion* (2015) and over thirty refereed articles in leading journals of politics, international relations and area studies.

As China's flagship platform for cultural diplomacy, the global expansion of Confucius Institutes has been shadowed by mounting controversy—particularly in the West. Drawing on his unique experience as both a Chinese national and UK-based director, as well as a scholar of Chinese politics, the multi-volume project *Memoirs of a Confucius Institute Director* offers a rare insider's perspective on this contested institution.

This talk focuses on Volume I, which chronicles his directorship (2019–2025), tracing how the institute grew into an award-winning organisation while grappling with existential and structural challenges—from the disruptions of COVID-19 to the dissolution of Confucius Institute Headquarters, and the then UK ruling party's campaign to ban the institutes. Through this lived experience, the talk critically engages with the core allegations against Confucius Institutes, showing how Western media and political narratives often amplify genuine concerns yet oversimplify complexities—misrepresenting the realities on the ground.



Moderator

Prof. Jiangnan ZHU