

# Popular Television and National Belonging in Post-Reform Vietnam

**Nguyen Thu Giang**

Lecturer of Media Studies, Faculty of Journalism and Communication  
Vietnam National University, Hanoi

In this talk, Dr. Nguyen will discuss her forthcoming book (Routledge 2018) about the relationship between television and banal nationalism in Vietnam. Since the country's economic reform in 1986, Vietnamese television has experienced a tremendous shift from a purely propagandist tool of the Party-State into an all-pervasive medium of popular culture. The dynamics of Vietnamese television, however, are completely neglected in the field of international media studies, shadowed by the Western assumption of Vietnam being merely an oppressed land without media 'freedom'. In her book, Dr Nguyen seeks to challenge such stereotype to reveal the new effects of popular television. She argues that Vietnamese television helps conjure into being a very different form of nationhood that is based on homely concern, mundane pleasure, and weak resistance. This mediated sphere of national formation operates largely outside or beyond the domain of macro politics. Here the Vietnamese nation is understood not as a homogenous entity, but as plural and changing forms of cultural government enabled at the articulations of multiple realities, each centered on the regulating role of television. In sharp contrast to the previous image of Vietnam as a war-torn land, the new sense of national belonging promoted by post-Reform television is based on an implicit refusal of the socialist past, hopes on prosperity, and anxieties of the globalized future. The key concerns of this talk are thus the multiplicity, rupture, and limit of nationalist practices as affected by the recent development of popular television in Vietnam.

**Dr Giang Nguyen** finished her doctoral study at the University of Queensland in 2016, and is now a lecturer of media studies at the Vietnam National University in Hanoi. She has published works on the relationship between Vietnamese television and national belonging. Her monograph *Television in Post-Reform Vietnam: Nation, Media, Market* is to be published by Routledge in 2018. She is now interested in the emotional politics of social media in Vietnam. Her current research investigates how Vietnamese mothers use Facebook to navigate in an emerging economy of precarity caused by the widespread panic related to environmental and food toxicity. Similar to her works on Vietnamese television, this research is informed by Giang's interest in cultural globalization as situated mediation processes between global logics and local concerns, whose effects much exceed the way the Western world often imagines of the Vietnamese media landscape.

**Wednesday, March 7**

**12:00 Noon**

**Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue**