Memorializing Marital Intimacy: Writings of Sun Xingyan
孫星衍(1753-1818)

Friday, April 27, 2012
1:30 Hagerty Hall 0050

a lecture by
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In a moonlight night of the early 1770s, Sun Xingyan took a stroll with his wife Wang Caiwei (1753-1776) near the Yangzi River. The intimate event is memorialized in a beautiful poem by Sun that begins with the lines cited above. Such writings provide us with some of the most revealing sources for exploring marital love in arranged marriage in premodern China.

The talk will present some of this material, along with the records produced by Sun Xingyan’s friends and relatives, to consider questions about courtship and marital intimacy at a time when the modern notion of “love” was absent: how did the newly-wed interact, feel, and speak about their relationships? How were the modes of their expression of affection shaped by cultural, gender, and esthetic norms? What could the couple’s marriage— and the presentations of it — suggest about the thinking and practice in marital relations at the time?

Weijing Lu is associate professor of history at the University of California, San Diego. She is the author of True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late Imperial China (Stanford University Press. Winner of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians 2008 First Book Prize). Her current research focuses on family and marital practices of the seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries.