

Peter Zarrow (History)

UConn Humanities Institute Fellows' Public Talk

APRIL 12, 2016 -- 4:30-6:00 PM

AUSTIN 301

“Utopian Democracy and the Birth of Chinese Liberalism: John Dewey, Chen Duxiu, and Hu Shi”



The idea of “Chinese liberalism” has struck many inside and outside of China as an oxymoron, for better or worse. But in fact notions of liberty and equality, democracy and civil society came together in the politically tumultuous 1910s and 1920s. Arguably basing their ideas on an evolving synthesis of strands of Confucian and Western political thought, Chinese liberals sought to encourage the development of a stable political system that would also be free. This talk presents two case studies: of Chen Duxiu, who later became a founder of the Chinese Communist Party, and of Hu Shi, who later became Chiang Kai-shek’s ambassador to the United States, and their takes on Deweyan ideals.

Peter Zarrow is professor of History at UConn. His research focuses on modern Chinese intellectual and cultural history. He is the author most recently of *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924* and *Educating China: Knowledge, Society and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937*.