



## A Tale of Two Chinas: Aging and Family Change in Rural and Urban China

- Speaker:** Prof. Merrill Silverstein  
Marjorie Cantor Endowed Professor in Aging,  
Syracuse University
- Chair:** Prof. Wei-Jun Jean Yeung  
National University of Singapore
- Date:** 3 February 2015, Tuesday
- Time:** 12.00pm -1.30pm
- Venue:** FASS Executive Seminar Room, 01-07  
The Shaw Foundation Building (AS7)



### Abstract

China is a rapidly aging society, but rural China is aging at a much faster rate than the rest of the nation. Rural-urban differences have important implications for an aging China, particularly as they reflect unique public policies and family dynamics. In rural regions, families are larger, incomes are lower, rates of migration are higher, and values toward filial care are more traditional. New schemes for pensions and health care have changed the policy landscape for rural Chinese elders, but economic support and care for older adults are still mostly a family matter. Comparisons show that rural elders hold stronger expectations for economic support from children than do urban elders, with much of this difference explained by the lower income of older adults in rural China. Economic support provided by adult children in rural China is consequential as it tends to increase the use of needed health care services by older parents. Evidence suggests that the family still plays an important economic role for elders in rural China and filial expectations for economic support continue to be strong. The consequences of increased pensions and development of formal long-term care policies for older adults in rural China are discussed in light of their influence on the involvement of families with their elderly members.

### About the speaker

Merril Silverstein, PhD, is inaugural holder of the Marjorie Cantor Chair in Aging Studies at Syracuse University in the Maxwell Department of Sociology and School of Social Work. He received his doctorate in sociology from Columbia University. In over 150 publications his research focuses on aging in the context of family life, with an emphasis on life course and international perspectives. He served as principal investigator of the Longitudinal Study of Generations and has projects in China, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Israel. He was a Brookdale and Fulbright Scholar and recently served as editor-in-chief of Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences.