

**[News]**

Tobunken Seminar:

Prof. Anne CHENG (Collège de France) Lecture "The Question of Despotism in the Reception of Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois* in Japan and China"

Presenter:

**Anne CHENG** Professor, Collège de France



Title & Date:

2024 April 18<sup>th</sup> (Friday) 14:00 – 16:00 (JPN time)

**“The Question of Despotism in the Reception of  
Montesquieu’s *De l’Esprit des lois* in Japan and China”**

Venue:

Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo  
Conference room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor (\* On-site only)

Language: English

Facilitator: Prof. Takahiro Nakajima (Director, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia)

Abstract:

One of the most famous quotes from Montesquieu’s *De l’Esprit des lois* is : “China is thus a despotic state of which the principle is fear”. Before jumping to hasty conclusions driven by the present context, I suggest that we should start with delving into the history of the reception of Montesquieu’s thought and most famous work first in Meiji Japan, and then in late imperial China. We should analyse the strategies adopted in Japan to translate such key concepts as the “separation of powers”, the distinction of different types of government, and the opposition between “despotism” and “constitutionalism”. We can then move on to the way Chinese literati of the turn of the 20th century appropriated these concepts, and eventually to the way Chinese intellectuals of modern times are challenging both Montesquieu’s verdict and its Japanese mediation in a context of rising nationalism.

This lecture is co-hosted by Tokyo College, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, East Asian Academy for New Liberal Arts and Ushioda Initiative of Arts.

For attending the lecture,  
please register from the link below:

<https://forms.gle/MHWz2Weh5j9ndCje7>

