

# “A Sociology of Confucianism as a World Religion”

**Anna Sun** (Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Duke University)

Confucianism is one of the most complex religious traditions in the world. This talk is based on my ethnographical fieldwork as well as survey research on contemporary Confucian rituals in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the United States. I first offer a brief historical outline of the contentious issue of Confucianism as a religion; I then give a brief account of the essential elements in Confucianism as a lived Religion. I then turn to the three theoretical themes that I believe to be central to a sociological study of Confucianism: a) the significance of seeing Confucianism as part of a lived religious system rather than merely a standalone tradition; b) the necessity of clarifying the concept of religious identity, especially the difference between what I call “explicit religious identity” and “implicit religious identity”; c) the centrality of taking ritual practices seriously, especially what I call “multi-ritualism” or “polythusia” in Confucian life. These theoretical interventions might be of use not only to the study of Confucianism as lived religion, but also to other non-monotheistic religious traditions.



**Anna Sun** is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Sociology at Duke University. Her publications include *Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities* (Princeton UP, 2013), winner of book awards from the American Academy of Religion and the American Sociological Association; co-edited volume *Situating Spirituality: Context, Practice, and Power* (Oxford UP, 2021); and *Against Happiness*, co-authored with interdisciplinary colleagues about comparative notions of wellbeing (Columbia UP, 2023). She is currently working on two monographs, one on Global Confucianism, the other on contemporary ritual life. She has served as Co-Chair of the Chinese Religions Unit of the American Academy of Religion and is an advisory board member of the Women’s Study in Religion Program at the Harvard Divinity School.

This talk is organized by James Farrer (Professor of Sociology, Sophia University).

ICC, Sophia University / <https://www.icc-sophia.com/>

Confucianism  
as a WORLD  
RELIGION

Contested  
Histories  
and  
Contemporary  
Realities

Anna Sun

**May 15, 2024, 18:00 - 19:30**

**Room 301, 3F, Building 10,  
Sophia University**

**In person only**

**No registration necessary.**