



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR  
LECTURE SERIES

# A World without Hope: Putting an End to Luck in Early Chinese Thought

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In this talk, drawing on a chapter from my current book project, I argue that a common goal of various philosophies of governance in early China was the elimination of luck and favor (*xing* 幸). This concern for the elimination of luck was a relatively straightforward statement of a widespread notion of what we might call “justice”: people should get what they deserve. That is, people should not be shown any special favor and their ability to game their luck or curry such favor through various sorts of machinations should be limited to the greatest degree possible. As an ideal, this is not much contested in early sources. How to achieve the ideal was, of course, hotly contested. While we see few texts that openly advertise giving people what they *do not* deserve, we do see imperial practices and rhetorical gestures that implicitly mark the importance of favor. For the purposes of this talk, I want to focus on the claims that good rule requires the elimination of luck and favor. I also examine the way so-called undeserved favors were institutionalized and the different ways in which people came to think about and criticize these institutions and practices.

**December 6, 2024, 4:30–6:30 pm**

**Faculty House, 64 Morningside Drive, Columbia University**

\*Please check the announcement board in the first-floor lobby for room information

*Registration required. Please RSVP at [www.tangcenter-columbia.org](http://www.tangcenter-columbia.org) by **December 1***

**Seminar Co-Chairs:**

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