Yuen Yuen Ang will present her research on an unorthodox structure of bureaucracy evolved in local China – diverging from the “Weberian” model – where public agents, in firm-liked fashion, receive highly variant compensation pegged to economic performance. Even though petty rents extraction by local agencies is state-sanctioned and rewarding to local bureaucrats in the short term, it is ultimately local development that raises public compensation over the long term. Drawing on the Chinese case, Ang will discuss broader implications of her study for rethinking what good governance consists of; how public bureaucracies are supposed to be incentivized and organized; and “second best” paths to state reform.

About the speaker:

Yuen Yuen Ang joined the Political Science Department at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor in 2011. Prior to joining Michigan, she taught at Columbia University School of International & Public Affairs (SIPA). She received her Ph.D in Political Science from Stanford University. She studies institutions and political economy of development with a focus on contemporary China. Her current book project examines why China has developed under highly interventionist local states despite a seemingly corrupt and flawed public administration. Her research has been supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies and Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation. Ang has done field research in Southern, Northern, and Western provinces of China. She has interviewed over 250 local bureaucrats, covering over 20 sectors of government.