

**Guest Talk of SSC3102 Seminar in Social and Public Policy Issues**

# **“The Uniqueness of Hong Kong’s Democracy: Implications for Comparative Politics and China”**

(in English)

**Date: 2 February 2015 (Monday)**  
**Time: 10:30 am - 11:30 am**  
**Venue: WYL104, Dorothy Y. L. Wong Building**



**Professor LO Shiu Hing Sonny**  
**Professor and Head, Department of Social Sciences**  
**The Hong Kong Institute of Education**

Prof. Lo argues that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has already developed its own brand of democracy different from the Western democratic systems. He contends that students of comparative democratization have focused excessively on the procedural aspects of democratization. The case of Hong Kong demonstrates that, substantively speaking, it is already a democracy with home grown characteristics, such as the rule of law, judicial independence, a strong civil society, and horizontal accountability with an assertive anti-corruption body and audit commission. In this light, the development of democratization in other parts of the world, including the People’s Republic of China, can perhaps focus on liberalization and the building up of the rule of law and judicial independence. Liberalization in the form of having a high degree of civil liberties and political rights can lay a solid foundation of democratization. Moreover, Prof. Lo notes that the boundaries between “external” and “internal” factors are far more ambiguous than conventional wisdom assumed. The PRC’s role in Hong Kong’s democratization has changed from being an “external” actor to a legitimate internal factor since July 1, 1997. Yet, it is simplistic to argue that the PRC is a factor hindering Hong Kong’s democratization. Instead, Beijing has been playing a dialectical role, supporting Hong Kong’s democratic development but also constraining its further expansion into a full-fledged Western-style democracy characterized by a rotation of political party in power, the selection of a Chief Executive independent from its control, and the competitive struggle among unscreened political leaders for the people’s votes.

**Biography:**

Professor Sonny Lo is Head and Professor in the Department of Social Sciences at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. This talk is based on his new book entitled *Hong Kong’s Indigenous Democracy*. He is a veteran political observer on the politics of Hong Kong and Macao.