

Lingnan Foundation Distinguished Lecture Series

The Politics and Poetics of AI: From Great Power Competition to Imaginaries of Good Life



Speaker

Professor Bingchun MENG

Department of Media and Communications
The London School of Economics and Political Science
Senior Lingnan Scholar
Lingnan University Institute for Advanced Study

Date | 23 September 2026

Time | 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM

Language | English

Mode | Face-to-face

Venue | MBG19, Patrick Lee Wan Keung Academic Building
Lingnan University

Abstract

Drawing on media anthropologist Brian Larkin's account of the "politics and poetics of infrastructure," this talk reads AI infrastructure as both. Its politics lie in the political rationality of development and security policy, which casts data, compute, and digital innovation as engines of growth and power. Its poetics lie in discourses that store within them desire and fantasy, taking on fetish-like aspects. The talk treats the social imaginary as the shared understanding that confers legitimacy—a terrain of historical layering and contestation. It reads U.S. and Chinese imaginaries of AI side by side: competing diagnoses of the role of the state, of the trajectories of innovation, and of the recoupling of technology to national purpose. These are not merely strategic postures but rival visions of the good life. Because the politics and poetics of AI are mutually constitutive, asking whose flourishing its imaginaries authorise is already a political and geopolitical question.

Biography

Bingchun Meng is a Professor in the Department for Media and Communications at LSE and the Director of LSE PhD Academy and LSE-ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership. She is also the Co-Director of LSE-Fudan Global Public Policy Research Centre. Her research interests include gender and the media, political economy of media industries, communication governance, and comparative media studies. She has published widely in these topic areas on leading academic journals. From 2020 to 2021, she served as a Senior Fellow of Global Governance Futures 2035 organised by Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin under the sponsorship with Bosch Foundation. In December 2025, Prof Meng was appointed Senior Lingnan Fellow of Lingnan University Institute of Advanced Studies (LUIAS). Her book *The Politics of Chinese Media: Consensus and Contestation* was published by Palgrave in early 2018. Her co-edited volume (with Guobin Yang and Elaine Yuan) *Pandemic Crossings: Digital Technology, Everyday Experience and Governance in the Covid-19 Crisis* is coming out with Michigan University Press in January 2024. She is currently working on another monograph under contract with Columbia University Press about AI industries in China.

ALL ARE WELCOME

Scan to Register



Enquiries

☎ 2616 8847

✉ luias@ln.edu.hk