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SPRING 2011 RESEARCH SEMINARS ON CHINA

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Wednesday, April 27, 12:00 noon
Tokioka Room, Moore Hall 319

“Confucian Masculinity in 18th-Century Chinese Fiction”

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This paper relies on a number of 18th century Chinese novels that feature a critique of Confucian masculinity, one that is actually already detectable in the fiction from the previous century, and that arguably intensifies after the fall of the Ming empire to the foreign Manchus. The response to such a perceived crisis of the literati in these fictional works, I argue, centrally involves a reappraisal of the issue of gender, which in turn leads to the production of increasingly hybrid male heroes--literati, that is, whose exceptional power is predicated on their summing up a variety of masculine traits, including some deriving from ideological traditions other than their own. At the same time, the generally conservative, anti-libertinist trend that these novels represent, I also propose, is responsible for their unusually critical stance toward homoerotic relations between men.

Giovanni Vitiello teaches Chinese literature in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. His research focuses on late imperial fiction and the history of sexuality. His book *The Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China* is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press.