

Professor Leung Yuen-sang

Honorary Fellow Citation



The founding mission of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is 'to combine tradition with modernity, and to bring together China and the West'. It aims to bridge the gap between historical conventions and contemporary creations, while also promoting an understanding of the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Additionally, CUHK aspires to examining the intersection of the past and the present and, in so doing, exemplifying a deep commitment to the humanities. This ambitious pursuit sets a high standard, making it a challenging goal for ordinary scholars to attain. However, Professor Leung Yuen-sang's academic track accurately reflects his determination to fulfill this ambitious mission, and the shining achievements he made along the journey.

The young Professor Leung graduated from the History Department of Chung Chi College, CUHK, with first-class honours. He continued his academic journey by pursuing a research-based master's degree at the College, which he completed in 1974. During this time, he was granted a scholarship that enabled him to travel to the United States and enrol in the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he embarked on a doctoral degree under the guidance of the esteemed Chinese historian, Professor Immanuel Hsu Chung-yueh. At Santa Barbara, Professor Leung immersed himself in a comprehensive exploration of various historical fields, including American history, Japanese history, and European history. As part of his doctoral studies, he had the privilege of serving as a teaching assistant to Professor Robert L. Kelley, a prominent figure in American history renowned for his groundbreaking work in 'public history'. This opportunity allowed Professor Leung to engage in profound exchanges with Professor Kelley, polishing his research

methodology and exposing him to the emerging landscape of public history within a broader academic community. In 1980, the University of California at Santa Barbara awarded him the Doctor of Philosophy in History.

After Santa Barbara, Professor Leung began his illustrious career, first as a lecturer and later a senior lecturer, in the Department of Chinese Studies at the National University of Singapore. During this period, he dedicated himself to teaching and conducting research in the fields of literature and history. He then expanded his academic horizons by teaching at one of the campuses of California State University in the United States. In 1992, Professor Leung returned to Hong Kong and joined the History Department of CUHK as professor. Recognising his exceptional contributions, he was promoted to Chair Professor in 2004. Furthermore, his alma mater, Chung Chi College, appointed him as its head in the same year, a role he served for ten years. Under his visionary leadership, the College achieved remarkable progress in all its endeavours. In 2006, Professor Leung took on additional responsibilities, assuming the concurrent appointments as head respectively of the History Department and the Arts Faculty's Research Institute for the Humanities. Two years later, he added yet another concurrent appointment,

as the head of the Research Centre for Contemporary Chinese Culture under the wing of the CUHK Institute of Chinese Studies. In recognition of his scholarly achievements and outstanding leadership, he was appointed member respectively of the CUHK Research Committee and the Management Committee of the Arts Faculty's Centre for China Studies. In 2012, Professor Leung was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts, a position he held until 2018. During that period, he also served as Director of the CUHK Institute of Chinese Studies. Under his deanship, the Faculty of Arts witnessed significant growth in its teaching and research programmes in the humanities, largely due to his unwavering dedication. His fair and equitable approach, coupled with his exceptional academic leadership, garnered high praise from colleagues within the Faculty of Arts, and earned him respect from faculty and researchers across the wider University community.

With an academic background that spans both the East and West, Professor Leung possesses the unique ability to seamlessly integrate Chinese and Western cultures in all of his academic pursuits. Armed with extensive knowledge and valuable research experience, Professor Leung effortlessly forges connections across various academic disciplines, resulting in interdisciplinary

discoveries. These accomplishments establish him as an exceptional scholar with diverse talents and expertise in fields such as history, literature, and associated subjects. Furthermore, Professor Leung's specialised research areas can broadly be categorised into five main areas: modern Chinese history, urban history, Chinese Christian history, Southeast Asian history and Chinese immigrant society, and Confucianism and cultural migration. In essence, his academic work centres around the fusion of tradition and modernity, as well as the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, which incidentally aligns closely with the mission of our University.

Through his research on Chinese and Western cultures, Professor Leung delves into relevant archival documents, examining the intricate relationship between religion and Chinese society. He also explores the resurgence of Confucianism in the late 20th century in the West through the lenses of the 'Confucian-Christian Dialogue' and the 'Boston Confucians'. In his book *Seeking Confucianism in the West: Tracing the Transmission Paths of Confucianism to the West*, Professor Leung showcases his profound insights and exceptional academic leadership in this field. In 2004, Professor Leung published an anthology titled *Cross-Shaped Lotus: Christianity and*

Chinese History and Cultures, wherein he contextualises Western Christian history within the framework of modern Chinese history, skillfully integrating references from both domains. His work transcends traditional theories, offering fresh perspectives and presenting insightful and unique revelations in this particular sphere.

Professor Leung's recent works shed light on the integration of tradition and modernity by examining the transmission of traditional Confucianism in the modern era. One notable contribution is his book titled *Counterflows of the May Fourth Movement: The Southern Migration of Classical Learning and the Emergence of Confucian Studies in Hong Kong*. This work delves into the early 20th-century movement in Hong Kong, when the academia sought to preserve Confucian rituals and teachings. For instance, a group of esteemed scholars and retired officials from the Qing Dynasty, including Lai Jixi and Chen Botao, established in 1923 the Hok Hoi Library in Hong Kong. Through academic research, educational promotion, and the deep cultivation of Chinese cultural heritage, they made significant contributions towards this special unexplored territory. Likewise, the early 'Confucian Renaissance Movement' in Singapore was spearheaded by scholars who migrated from the north, such as Kang Youwei and Qiu Fengjia. Their active promotion of

Confucianism through publications, lectures, and temple construction received strong support from the locals. The movement had resonated in neighbouring areas like Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Penang, Java, and Sarawak, leaving a lasting and profound influence in the Chinese community in the region.

During his doctoral studies in the United States, Professor Leung was deeply inspired by the groundbreaking work of Professor Kelley in the field of public history. Professor Kelley emphasised the vital role of public history in various domains, including politics, business, law, museums, and archives. This inspiration led Professor Leung to recognise the profound significance of public history in contemporary society. Driven by his newfound appreciation for public history, Professor Leung took the initiative to introduce the concept to the Department of History at CUHK in the late 1990s. This pioneering effort made the Department the first in Hong Kong to incorporate public history into scholarly pursuits. The Department also became the trailblazer in offering courses on public history, emphasising the integration of knowledge, theory, and practical application in the study of history. The objectives of these new courses encompass a range of learning outcomes. Students are trained to apply the theories they learn in the classroom to practical contexts, such as cultural tourism,

heritage conservation, community research, and curating exhibitions. The scope of these courses also encompasses digital humanities, museum studies, and cultural heritage management, blending tradition and modernity and enabling analysis of the past to inform present strategies. Since their inception, these courses have been met with great enthusiasm not only on campus but in the wider community of Hong Kong, generating interest from retired government officials as well as prominent political and business figures. Professor Leung's lectures on public history have been enlightening and authoritative, earning widespread recognition and making significant contributions within both the academic community and the general public of Hong Kong.

At this ceremony, we have the privilege of recognising an eminent historian who embodies the founding spirit of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. This distinguished scholar and educator has not only achieved remarkable academic accomplishments but has also made significant contributions to the field of humanities. Moreover, he has pioneered the introduction of public history to Hong Kong. Mr Chairman, it is my great pleasure to present Professor Leung Yuen-sang for an Honorary Fellowship of the University.