

PRESENTED BY THE ENERGY HUMANITIES AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH RESEARCH CLUSTER

UNDERSTANDING SMALL HYDROPOWER IN CHINA'S SOUTHWEST FRONTIER, YUNNAN PROVINCE



MARCH 28



3:00 PM



GLAS 311



FEATURING

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Development of energy infrastructure occupies a pivotal role in shaping a range of China's contemporary challenges. Broadly, development of large hydroelectric facilities—reflecting efforts to expand renewable energy generation and mitigate pressing environmental concerns—has increased substantially over the past two decades. Large dams provide significant amounts of power both in terms of economy and energy and, as a result, support China's ongoing transformation. The very size of these projects should not, but largely have, obscured other developments of immense significance; small hydropower. In China, small operations, specifically facilities with an operating capacity under 50 Megawatts, have been promoted as a tool for 'electrifying the countryside,' spurring development and improving the quality of life for ethnic minority communities in rural and peripheral areas. Undertaken through an ethnographic study over ten years, this research critically evaluates how small-scale hydroelectric operations in a remote corner of Yunnan Province shape socioeconomic indicators, environmental concerns and the everyday life of residents in marginalized communities.

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