

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY



# Colloquium Series

Featuring Alumni in Celebration of 100 Years of OSU Geography

## **Circularity, Flexibility, and Security: Labor Migration and Split Households in China**

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**3:30pm Thursday, April 30  
Derby 1080**

The assumption that the family migrates as a unit underlies many studies of migration. Yet, labor migration in less developed economies, international migration, and transnational migration, is often characterized by a split-household arrangement, where the migrant worker leaves behind the rest of the family at his/her place of origin. Numbering about 150 million, China's floating population consists mainly of rural migrants that change jobs frequently and circulate back and forth between the city and the countryside. Based on a study of rural households in Sichuan and Anhui provinces, and using household biographies and narratives to foreground migrants agency and voices, I argue that migrants use work flexibility as a strategy to obtain the best of the urban and rural worlds. This strategy demands flexibility in household organization, often involving division of labor, negotiations and tensions between genders, generations, and households.



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The Geography Colloquium series is funded in part through the John Nelson Endowment and the Alumni, Faculty, and Friends of the Ohio State Geography endowment.