

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

ACTION REQUEST

**Subject: Report of Faculty Death**  
**Action Requested: Adoption of Memorial Statement**

The Regents of the University of Michigan acknowledge with profound sadness the death of **Xiaohong Xu, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of sociology and assistant professor of International Institute in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Professor Xu died on December 12, 2023, at the age of 45.

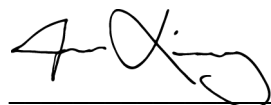
Professor Xu received his B.A. degree in sociology from Peking University, China, in 2001, his M.A. degree in sociology from the University of Notre Dame in 2005, his M.Phil. degree in sociology from Yale University in 2010, and his Ph.D. degree in sociology from Yale University in 2014. He held faculty appointments as an assistant professor of sociology at the National University of Singapore, 2014-2018, and at Lingnan University, 2018-2019. In 2019, he joined the University of Michigan faculty as an assistant professor of sociology and as faculty associate with the Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies and the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies.

Xiaohong Xu's research focused on the intersection of comparative historical sociology, cultural sociology, and political economy. His award-winning work about the Chinese Cultural Revolution has been published in some of sociology's most central journals. Xu dedicated his life to developing an innovative cultural framework that examined how revolutionary vanguards arise and create historical change. Toward the end of his life, his research focused on the dynamics of politicization and depoliticization in modern China, ranging from the Communist revolution to the pro-democracy protests in contemporary Hong Kong. He drafted a cornerstone article to be published posthumously, entitled *The Great Separation: The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Political Origins of Our Time*, which argues that the Chinese Cultural Revolution laid the foundations to China's subsequent turn to neoliberalism and depoliticized economism. His writing was bold and courageous, as was his approach to public intellectual life. He appeared on numerous panels on contemporary China, wrote about current issues in public forums, and marched with pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong during the turbulent spring and summer of 2019. His ambitious research program will have a lasting impact on future scholars of culture, revolution, comparative-historical sociology, and social theory.

Xiaohong Xu's brilliance, originality, and adventurous intellectual spirit shone through his work, with erudition and curiosity that was only matched by his humility and kindness. His career and his life were kindled by a boundless passion for knowledge and ideas, and his bonhomie and far-reaching impact are evident in the hundreds of letters and messages sent to him from across the sociological discipline and beyond during his last weeks of life.

As we mourn the loss of our beloved colleague, we extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife Lang Chen and nine-year-old daughter Aubree Xu. He will be forever missed by them and by numerous loving family, friends, colleagues, and students.

**Requested by:**



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**Jon Kinsey**  
**Vice President and Secretary of the University**

**May 2024**