



**The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Department of Applied Mathematics**

Seminar

On

**Did the 1918-19 Influenza Pandemic
Originate in China?**

by

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Abstract

In this article the main object is to establish whether China, like virtually every other country in the world, experienced an outbreak of influenza in 1918-19 and, if so, to gauge the extent and severity of that outbreak. It also attempts, in light of China's experience at that time, to assess the plausibility of the suggestion that the 1918-19 influenza virus may have originated in China, as well as the suggestion that Chinese workers who travelled to France during World War 1 may have been responsible for spreading the disease far more widely. It concludes that influenza was widespread in China in 1918-19, but that, although severe in some parts, it was mild in many places compared with elsewhere in the world. It argues that the most plausible explanation is that the 1918-19 influenza virus, or a closely related precursor, originated in China, so that many Chinese had prior exposure and hence some immunity. It is thus conceivable that Chinese workers en route to France would have carried this virus with them, leading to the pandemic.

Date : 10 December, 2007 (Monday)
Time : 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
**Venue : Departmental Conference Room HJ610
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

*** * * ALL ARE WELCOME * * ***