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### President's 2022 Early Career Award Recognizes Social Sciences Professor

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## ACADEMICS

# President's 2022 Early Career Award Recognizes Social Sciences Professor

BY WEB COMMUNICATIONS ON APRIL 5, 2022



▲ Dr. Zhang, GWU's newest Social Sciences professor, gives a lecture to students in her Tuesday afternoon class on February 9th, 2021.

## Dr. Aihua Zhang Honored for Exceptional Productivity in Scholarship, Creative Discovery and Instruction

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Dr. Aihua Zhang, assistant professor in the Gardner-Webb University Department of Social Sciences, has been recognized for her exceptional productivity in scholarship, creative discovery, and instruction. She is the recipient of the President's Early Career Award for 2022.

Presented to qualified full-time assistant professors, the Early Career Award also honors Zhang's outstanding performance in professional development and excellence in community service. The annual award includes an additional \$1,000 in professional development funds for Zhang to use during the 2022-23 academic year.

"It is an honor to recognize and reward outstanding faculty, and I'm so pleased that this year we can highlight Dr. Zhang's fast start at GWU," noted GWU President William Downs. "Students always benefit from professors with active research programs,



and Dr. Zhang is bringing her passion for scholarship to the classroom. She's very much deserving of the President's Early Career Award."

Zhang began her work at Gardner-Webb in 2019. "I feel so privileged, honored, and grateful for this award," she asserted. "It will definitely help me improve myself and do better in the future."

Last year, Zhang was recognized with the faculty scholarship award. She recently published a book, "The Beijing Young Women's Christian Association." In nominating Zhang for the award, Dr. Dianne Sykes, chair of the Department of Social Sciences quoted a peer reviewer who described Zhang's work as "an important contribution to scholarship on Chinese Christianity, transnational women's organizations, and the wide range of movements which could be considered 'feminist' in Republican China."



Zhang has also published several journal articles and encyclopedia entries. Her most recent article, "Reinventing Tradition and Indigenizing Modernity: The Beijing New Women and their Creation of a New Feminine Leisure Culture 1911-1937," was published in the "Women's History Review Journal." Other scholarly works have appeared in "Christianity and the Modern Women in East Asia," "Journal for Liberal Arts and Sciences," "Postscript: A Journal of Graduate Criticism and Theory 8," and "World Leisure Journal 52."

Zhang was also awarded the Madeleine L'Engle Travel Research Fellowship (2020-2021), which provides stipends to support travel by researchers to use the special collections at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. She consistently seeks out funding opportunities to pursue her research, and has presented papers at regional, national and international conferences. She helped to complete a collaborative project that resulted in a public database on women and social movements since 1820. She is also working with other scholars on a women's oral history in which her job is to record Chinese women's voices and experiences in Mao's China.

Sykes praised Zhang's work and noted, "Her purpose is to make women visible, restore their voices and expose their agency in the areas where they were dismissed, silenced, or marginalized. Her hope is to gain a more objective evaluation of women's roles in history, creating a fuller understanding of the human experience. Dr. Zhang has used her research in creating innovative courses for our department. Our students are so fortunate to have her with us, and she has received great evaluations from them."

Zhang teaches Modern East Asia, Global Understanding, Modern China, Western Civilization I and II and Premodern China. She serves on the Professional Readiness Experience Committee and the Library

Council. She has been a guest speaker in multiple classes and assisted the Dover Library staff in organizing a display for Chinese New Year.

*Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at [Gardner-Webb.edu](https://gardner-webb.edu/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/>).*