This talk explores the historical context and challenges in examining French colonial Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos) from 1858 to 1945. Rather than position colonialism as an external agent of change, this talk analyzes the colonial encounter as complex exchanges, geographically diverse, and socially uneven. Key debates addressed include the production and legacies of colonial knowledge, construction of modernity and civilization, and articulations of identities around gender, class, and nation.

Cindy Nguyen earned her Ph.D. in History at University of California, Berkeley (2019) and is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cogut Institute for the Humanities with the Department of History at Brown University. She specializes in the history of Vietnam, Southeast Asia print culture and libraries with an upcoming book manuscript, "Reading and Misreading: The Social Life of Libraries and Colonial Control in Vietnam, 1865-1958." She teaches courses on SE Asia, comparative empires, history of information and classification, memory and diaspora, print culture and history of the book.