



JOHNS HOPKINS  
SCHOOL of ADVANCED  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



## The Hopkins China Forum



Royal Asiatic Society in Shanghai and



UBC Alumni Club of Shanghai

cordially invite you to:

### *Trying Not to Try: Ancient China, Modern Science, and the Power of Spontaneity*

**Edward Slingerland**

Professor of Asian Studies  
University of British Columbia

Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
19:15pm – 20:30 pm

**cafésambal** authentic malaysian  
cuisine & bar

259 Jiashan Lu, Jiashan Market, Block A, No 37, near Jianguo Xi Lu  
嘉善路 259 弄 37 号嘉善老市 A 栋, 近建国西路, 地铁九号线嘉善路站

**Admission: 50RMB**

19:00 – Doors Open  
19:15 – Lecture  
20:00 – Q&A  
20:30 – Mixer

Please RSVP to Frank Tsai of [Hopkins China Forum](http://Hopkins China Forum) by writing to [editor@shanghai-review.org](mailto:editor@shanghai-review.org).

We've long been told that the best way to reach our goals or to be satisfied is to try harder or strive more intensely, but pushing harder is in fact often counterproductive. Some of the most desirable states in life—happiness, attractiveness, physical skill—are best pursued indirectly. This was recognized by early the Chinese thinkers, both Daoists and Confucians, who embraced an embodied model of the self and focused on the power of spontaneous wu-wei or “effortless action.” How, though, can a person try to be spontaneous? Tonight, the author of [Trying Not to Try](#), explores and unpacks this paradox, which lies at the heart of tensions surrounding creativity, virtue, and trust, using the tools of ancient Chinese thought and modern cognitive science.

[Edward Slingerland](#) is Professor of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia, where he also holds appointments in the Departments of Psychology and Philosophy. He is an expert on early Chinese thought, comparative religion and cognitive science of religion, cognitive linguistics, and humanities-science integration. Slingerland is the author of several academic monographs and edited volumes from Oxford and Cambridge University Press, a major translation of the Analects of Confucius, and approximately fifty book chapters, reviews, and articles in top academic journals in a wide range of fields, from cognitive science and linguistics to Asian studies, philosophy, religious studies and international relations. His first popular book, [Trying Not To Try: Ancient China, Modern Science and the Power of Spontaneity](#) (2014) ties together insights from early Chinese thought and modern psychological research. Slingerland is also in charge of a multimillion-dollar, international research project examining the evolutionary roots of human religion and morality and Director of the Database of Religious History. Slingerland holds a BA from Princeton and PhD from Stanford.

*About Hopkins China Forum: Hopkins China Forum events are organized under the auspices of The Johns Hopkins University and its affiliated alumni associations worldwide. For more information on Hopkins events in Shanghai, please contact Frank Tsai at the Johns Hopkins University Alumni Association – Shanghai at [editor@shanghai-review.org](mailto:editor@shanghai-review.org).*